SOUTHWORTH LIBRARY No. 172

SWEET LOVE'S ATONEMENT

BY MRS. E. D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH

MRS. E. D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH
PHOTO COPYRIGHT, 1904.

STREET & SMITH, PUBLISHERS, NEW YORK

The Only Complete Line of Mrs. Southworth's Novels

Southworth Library

(THE EDEN SERIES)

PRICE, TEN CENTS PER COPY

(Trade supplied exclusively by the American News Company and its branches.)

This library was formerly known as the "Eden Series," but inasmuch as it contains exclusively all the popular novels of the famous Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth, we believe that the new name is more indicative of its character.

There are eighty-five different titles contained in it, forty of which are the author's later copyrights, and which therefore cannot be had in any other edition.

NOTICE:—If these books are sent by mail, four cents must be added to the price of each copy to cover postage.

173—Zenobia's Suitors .....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
Sequel to "Sweet Love's Atonement"
172—Sweet Love's Atonement.By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
171—When Shadows Die.....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
Sequel to "Love's Bitterest Cup"
170—Love's Bitterest Cup.....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
Sequel to "Her Mother's Secret"
169—Her Mother's Secret....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
168—The Mysterious Marriage...Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
Sequel to "A Leap in the Dark"
167—A Leap in the Dark.....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
166—Fulfilling Her Destiny...By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
Sequel to "When Love Commands"
165—When Love Commands..By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
Sequel to "The Widows of Widowville"
164—The Widows of Widowville.Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
163—Unrequited Love .....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
Sequel to "For Woman's Love"
162—For Woman's Love.....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
161—To His Fate.....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
Sequel to "Dorothy Harcourt's Secret"
160—Dorothy Harcourt's Secret..Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
Sequel to "A Deed Without a Name"
159—A Deed Without a Name...Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
158—Brandon Coyle's Wife...By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
Sequel to "A Skeleton in the Closet"
157—A Skeleton in the Closet.By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
156—For Whose Sake?.....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
Sequel to "Why Did He Wed Her?"
155—Why Did He Wed Her?.By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
154—David Lindsay .....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
Sequel to "Gloria"

153—Gloria. . . ..By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
152—The Test of Love.....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
Sequel to "A Tortured Heart"
151—A Tortured Heart.....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
Sequel to "The Trail of the Serpent"
150—The Trail of the Serpent....Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
149—The Struggle of a Soul..By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
Sequel to "The Lost Lady of Lone"
148—The Lost Lady of Lone..By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
147—Her Love or Her Life?..By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
Sequel to "The Bride's Ordeal"
146—The Bride's Ordeal.....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
145—Lilith. . . ..By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
Sequel to "The Unloved Wife"
144—The Unloved Wife.....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
143—Em's Husband .....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
Sequel to "Em"
142—Em. . . ..By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
141—Reunited. . . ..By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
Sequel to "Gertrude Haddon"
140—Gertrude Haddon .....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
Sequel to "A Husband's Devotion"
139—A Husband's Devotion..By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
Sequel to "The Rejected Bride"
138—The Rejected Bride.....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
Sequel to "Gertrude's Sacrifice"
137—Gertrude's Sacrifice .....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
Sequel to "Only a Girl's Heart"
136—Only a Girl's Heart.....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
134—Little Nea's Engagement. By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
Sequel to "Nearest and Dearest"
133—Nearest and Dearest....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
81—The Artist's Love.....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
53—Capitola's Peril .....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
Sequel to "The Hidden Hand"
52—The Hidden Hand.....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
42—The Mystery of Raven Rocks,
Sequel to "Unknown" By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
41—Unknown. . . ..By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
40—Tried for Her Life.....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
(Vol. II. The Holloweve Mystery)
Sequel to "Cruel as the Grave"
39—Cruel as the Grave.....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
(Vol. I. The Holloweve Mystery)
38—Victor's Triumph .....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
Sequel to "A Beautiful Fiend"
37—A Beautiful Fiend.....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
36—A Noble Lord.....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
Sequel to "The Lost Heir of Linlithgow"
35—The Lost Heir of Linlithgow,
By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth

34—The Lady of the Isle....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
33—The Bride's Fate.....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
(Vol. II. Winning Her Way)
Sequel to "The Changed Brides"
32—The Changed Brides.....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
(Vol. I. Winning Her Way)
31—The Doom of Deville....By Mrs. E. D E. N. Southworth
30—The Broken Engagement....Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
29—The Three Beauties; or, Shannondale,
By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
28—How He Won Her.....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
(Vol. II. Britomarte)
Sequel to "Fair Play"
27—Fair Play .....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
(Vol. I. Britomarte)
26—Love's Labor Won.....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
25—Eudora; or, The False Princess,
By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
24—The Two Sisters.....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
23—The Bridal Eve.....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
22—The Bride of Llewellyn..By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
(Vol. II. Left Alone)
Sequel to "The Widow's Son"
21—The Widow's Son.....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
(Vol. I. Left Alone)
20—The Bride's Dowry.....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
19—The Gipsy's Prophecy...By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
18—The Maiden Widow.....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
Sequel to "The Family Doom"
17—The Family Doom.....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
16—The Fortune Seeker.....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
15—The Haunted Homestead....Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
14—The Christmas Guest....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
13—The Three Sisters.....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
12—The Wife's Victory.....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
11—The Deserted Wife.....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
10—The Mother-in-Law; or, Married in Haste,
By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
9—The Discarded Daughter; or, The Children of the Isle,
By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
8—The Lost Heiress.....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
7—Vivia; or, The Secret of Power,
By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
6—The Curse of Clifton....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
5—The Missing Bride.....By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
4—India; or, The Pearl of Pearl River,
By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
3—Self-raised. . . ..By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
Sequel to "Ishmael"
2—Ishmael. . . ..By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth
1—Retribution. . . ..By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth

GENEROUS QUANTITY. COPYRIGHTED FICTION

NEW ROMANCE LIBRARY

Price, Fifteen Cents

(Trade supplied exclusively by the American News Company and its branches.)

The books in this line are of great merit. They are splendid love stories, written by authors who are acknowledged to excel in writing this class of fiction. We earnestly recommend them to readers who desire stirring stories of love and adventure.

NOTICE:—If these books are sent by mail, four cents must be added to the price of each copy to cover postage.

1—Cloak and Sword (Belle Rose).....By Amedee Achard
2—The Sword of a Gascon.....By Amedee Achard
3—The Huguenot's Love.....By Amedee Achard
4—The Dragons of La Guerche.....By Amedee Achard
5—To the Rescue.....By Alexandre Dumas
6—D'Artagnan's Exploits .....By Alexandre Dumas
7—Girls of a Feather.....By Mrs. Amelia E. Barr
8—Princess Mazaroff .....By Joseph Hatton
9—As the Wind Blows.....By Eleanor Merron
10—In Strange Company.....By Guy Boothby
11—The Two Brothers.....By Guy de Maupassant
12—The Beads of Tasma.....By Mrs. Amelia E. Barr
13—The Splendid Spur.....By A. T. Quiller-Couch
14—Captain Fracasse.....By Theophile Gautier
15—Young Mistley.....By Henry Seton Merriman
16—I Forbid the Banns.....By F. Frankfort Moore
17—Coningsby.....By Lord Beaconsfield

SWEET LOVE'S ATONEMENT

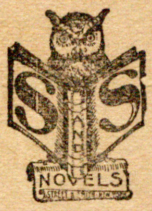
A NOVEL

BY

MRS. E. D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH

AUTHOR OF

"Unknown," "The Unloved Wife," "The Lost Lady of Lone," "Em," "Em's Husband," "David Lindsay," "For Woman's Love," etc.



NEW YORK
STREET & SMITH, PUBLISHERS,
79-89 SEVENTH AVENUE

So many non-copyright Southworth novels have been issued by various publishers, that we take occasion to advise the reading public that this novel is protected and can be read in no other edition.

STREET & SMITH.

Copyright, 1904
By STREET & SMITH

Sweet Love's Atonement

Publisher's Note

Notwithstanding the fact that the sales of magazines have increased tremendously during the past five or six years, the popularity of a good paper-covered novel, printed in attractive and convenient form, remains undiminished.

There are thousands of readers who do not care for magazines because the stories in them, as a rule, are short and just about the time they become interested in it, it ends and they are obliged to readjust their thoughts to a set of entirely different characters.

The S. & S. novel is long and complete and enables the reader to spend many hours of thorough enjoyment without doing any mental gymnastics. Our paper-covered books stand pre-eminent among up-to-date fiction. Every day sees a new copyrighted title added to the S. & S. lines, each one making them stronger, better and more invincible.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers
79-89 SEVENTH AVENUE, NEW YORK CITY

SWEET LOVE'S ATONEMENT.

CHAPTER I.

OLD HORAH HALL.

O'er that house there hangs a sullen gloom,
The footfalls fearful in each murky room,
Baleful, forbidding as some prison pile,
Where guards keep watch—a home without a smile.
—BULWER.

In the heart of the Alleghany Mountains, in a deep, rocky, thickly wooded glen, stands a huge, old colonial manor house.

It was built for strength and endurance, rather than for elegance, of rough-hewn red sandstone. It is an oblong, double-fronted house, of two stories, with basement and garret, steep roof, and tall chimneys at each gable end. A heavy portico of black oak in the middle of the front wall on the ground floor, having four tall windows on each side of it, and nine on the second story above it, and nine low dormer windows in the roof. In the rear were long stretches of lower buildings; and under the basement were deep cellars, dug out of the solid rock, and communicating with the winding caverns of the mountain ranges, which were inaccessible from any outside point.

The old trees that crowded around the house, overgrown and untrimmed, pressed so near that their branches touched the moldering walls and lay upon the musty roof.

Beyond this gloomy grove lay a neglected garden, overgrown with weeds and briers; a vineyard, with torn, trailing vines; an orchard, with diseased and dying fruit trees. Beyond these, again, lay desolate old fields, skirted by a thicket of stunted pines, cedars and firs, that filled

the remainder of the glen, and straggled up the encircling mountain sides.

It was a gloomy, repellent, depressing scene.

Yet time had been, and not so long ago, when Horah Hall had been the scene of lavish hospitality, luxurious feasting and reckless extravagance.

Horah Hall—or "Hurrah Hall," as the country people chose to pronounce the name, on account of the godless revels held there day and night; roystering orgies, whose songs and shouts so often startled the echoes of those gloomy gorges, and not unfrequently ended in rioting and bloodshed; and once, indeed, in a horrible tragedy that condemned the old mansion to the deeper degradation of having its ancient name corrupted from Horah Hall to "Horror Hall."

Horah Hall, I say, had been in the possession of the family whose name it bears since the earliest settlement of that part of the country, when the manor had been granted by royal letters patent from Charles I. to one Murdok Helman Horah, who was the builder of Horah Hall, and the founder of that rather evil-famed family, and whose name in full was borne by the eldest son in every succeeding generation.

They were all men and women of great mental and physical strength and beauty, so that marriage did very little to modify the peculiar family traits, which were potently impressed upon all their descendants. But they gave the less desirable traits to their progeny—inordinate pride, extravagant tastes, and ungovernable passions.

In this world there occasionally appears—at long intervals of time and distance of space, let us thank Heaven—a creature whom irresponsible power and unrestrained passions have combined to develop into a monster, more like unto a prehistoric savage of the earth's chaotic infancy, or unto some incarnate fiend from the bottomless pit of mythical fable, than unto a man of the nineteenth century, and a citizen of a Christian and civilized country.

Such a one was Mad Murdok Horah; or, to give him his full name and style, Murdok Helman Horah, Esquire, Horah Hall, Mistyrock, Virginia.

He was the youngest child and only son of his parents. Elder sisters he had in plenty, but these were married

and scattered all over the country, so that when, by the death of his parents, he came into the possession of his estate, there was no one left in the house to be any sort of moral restraint upon him, though it is doubtful whether in any house where he was master anyone else could have had the least influence.

He began a reckless career of dissipation; indulged in every pleasure wealth could purchase; in every vice the law could ignore; and inaugurated at Horah Hall a series of orgies that scandalized and terrified the neighborhood. He made the sweet, bright summer time hideous and horrible with his diabolical saturnalias.

Early in winter, however, he relieved the neighborhood of his baleful presence, and went to Washington City, and took a handsome suit of apartments at the most fashionable hotel in the national capital.

Here his rank, riches, handsome person and plausible address, won his way into society—never, from the very character of its organization, very difficult to enter by the humblest of the sovereign people, if he could command an evening dress.

These personal and circumstantial advantages also in due time won for him the heart and hand of one of the prettiest, wealthiest and most admired of the young débutantes of the season—Isabella, the orphan daughter of Gen. Argyl, of the United States Army.

The young couple were married in the spring, with great pomp and ceremony. The marriage was the most distinguished event of that social season.

The presents were magnificent. The society columns of the papers of the day were full of the details of the wedding.

The ceremony was celebrated at old St. Patrick's Church, and was followed by a magnificent reception and sumptuous breakfast at the house of the bride's guardian.

On the afternoon of the same day the newly married pair left Washington to go on their wedding tour.

They traveled first through various sections of our own country, and then sailed for Europe, where they spent a year in going over that continent.

In the second summer after their marriage they returned to their own country, and went down to Horah Hall, bringing with them their infant son, then aged about two months.

During the absence of its master, "Hurrah Hall" had enjoyed such a long interval of profound peace under the easy rule of old Mammy Dozia, the mulatto housekeeper of the mansion; such a rest from hard labor and harassing anxiety, under the merciful government of Mr. Miles, the good-natured overseer of the field hands, that when the news came by letter to the old man, announcing the speedy arrival of their master, it acted on the men and women of the house and plantation like a moral earthquake, shaking their souls into chaos.

That night a little group of frightened and disgusted darkies assembled before "Uncle Si's house," as a little, rough-hewn stone hut in the thicket under the shadow of the wooded mountain range was called.

Old Si, a slight, jet-black negro of fifty years, was the colored minstrel of the neighborhood; and a gifted man, as well as a character in his way. He had a rare talent for improvisation and a quaint sense of humor, and his impromptu and burlesque songs to the accompaniment of the banjo made him almost as much a terror to evildoers on the plantation as was his iniquitous master to all God-fearing and law-abiding citizens of the county.

He ridiculed the faults and foibles of man or woman, white or black, without fear or favor, by "puttin' 'em on de banjo," as he called his performances, which meant reciting their misdeeds and the consequences, near or remote, in a musical burlesque of his own composition, and executing it on his favorite instrument.

Old Si had to be extremely cautious when he risked the rage of his wild and furious young master "by putting him on de banjo," as he did on this occasion.

But there was no danger to-night; so he tuned up his instrument, played a prelude, and sang:

"He'll fotch his wife to 'Hurrah Hall,'
But he'll not mend his ways at all;
He'll keep it up bofe night an' day,
In a willful an' mos' wicked way."

As all him daddies did afore,
Only more, an' more, an' more;
Playin' high an' drinkin' deep,
Sowin' win', whirlwin' to reap.
Sins as brack as chimley sweep,
Keepin' sarvint men from sleep;
An' sellin' niggers now an' den,
For pay him t'ievin', gamblin' men.
But bymeby Ole Sam'll git him,
An' in de hottes' fires sit 'im.
Den we darkies all be please,
Sing, an' dance, an' take us ease.
Soun' de banjo on de breeze,
Dance to banjo under trees,
Dance to banjo, darkies all,
Dance to banjo till we fall;
Den jump up an' dance again,
Whedder sunshine, whedder rain;
In Sunday lubfeast praise an' pray,
Dat's de 'ligious, happy way."

By this time all the negroes were dancing and singing in a madly hilarious style; and how long this might have lasted there is no telling—probably until the performers actually would have dropped down from exhaustion—had they not been interrupted by the arrival of a colored girl from the house, who came running in hot haste to warn them of the approach of the master and his party.

"Dey's comin', dey's almos' 'riv, dey is! Dey's jus' turnin' youn' de Souf Yidge into de house road, an' dey'll be yere 'fo' yer kin git to de gate, Uncle Si, an' de fat'll be in de fire sho 'nough!" she cried, throwing up her hands in wild terror.

"Oh, Lor'! Oh, Lor'! Oh, Lor'!" cried the minstrel, dropping his banjo, and making off to the lodge gate to open it and receive his master.

The other negroes dispersed in groups, whispering their misgivings.

Old Si was just in time to open the great double iron gates, and swing them back to admit the heavy traveling carriage that had been sent to Mistyrock depot to meet the party.

The carriage contained the master and mistress, and a pretty young mulatto nurse, who carried the baby on her lap. The valet of Mr. Horah sat on the box beside the coachman.

Old Si stood holding one wing of the gate open with one hand, and his battered straw hat in the other, bowing as the carriage rolled along the avenue of oaks on its way to the house.

But no one responded to the old man's civilities except the pretty mulatto nurse, who returned them with a gracious nod and lovely smile, that immediately pierced Old Si's susceptible heart, so that he found himself in love for the first time—that summer.

He followed the carriage with a doglike devotedness, given not at all to master or mistress, but to that yellow enchantress who held the baby on her lap. He was already composing verses in her praise and honor.

When the carriage drew up before the portico, they found the whole front of the house brilliantly lighted up in honor of the arrival of the master and mistress. And as the window shutters were left open, and the crimson curtains were festooned back, the effect was that of a splendid illumination.

Murdok Horah alighted, and handed his beautiful wife to the pavement at the foot of the steps leading to the portico.

Old Si ran up before them and sounded a tremendous alarm on the heavy old iron lion's head that stood for a knocker, an unnecessary summons, as all the house servants were assembled in the front hall, awaiting the arrival of their master and mistress, so that the doors flew open simultaneously with the halt of the carriage, and the old housekeeper, Aunt Dozia, appeared courtesying at the entrance with all her handmaidens courtesying behind her.

The fair young wife smiled on the welcoming group; but the husband only gruffly demanded:

"Is supper ready? Have all the rooms in this infernal old barracks been well aired? Have all my orders been strictly obeyed?"

"All ob dem, Marse Murdok, sir. De rooms am all nice, an' sweet, an' cool as dey kin be. An' de supper am ready to go on de table whenebér yo' an' de young madam am," replied Dozia, as with another courtesy she opened the door of the drawing room on the right, and held it open while her master led his wife in.

The interior of the old house did not correspond with the brilliancy of the outside show of illumination on this occasion. The hall was bare of furniture, except for a pair of leather-covered armchairs on each side of the entrance door, and a few ugly fresco paintings of battle scenes, the work of a traveling artist of the previous century.

The vast drawing room was lighted by a large chandelier that hung from the ceiling, and revealed a scene of poverty-stricken or neglected grandeur in the old oak panelings that lined the lofty walls, in the richly carved oak mantelpieces that surmounted the fireplace, in the massive doors and window seats, in the dingy, black walnut floors, in the frayed and faded crimson damask curtains that hung from the high windows, and in the moldering Turkey rugs that lay before the broad marble hearth, and beside the old mahogany damask-covered sofa. There were no lounging chairs scattered through the room, no center tables covered with books and prints, no cabinets filled with bric-a-brac, such as adorn modern drawing rooms.

All here was old, bare and stiff. Rows of high-backed crimson damask-covered chairs stood against the walls, straight tables, with deep, folding leaves, stood at each end of the apartment. Over the mantelpiece, which was opposite the door, hung a large, smoke-dried oil painting, said to be one of the "old masters," probably for no other reason than because no human being could form a conjecture as to its subject, or even as to whether it was intended for a landscape or a historical piece, or even would unless the painting could be "restored," as the phrase goes.

But it is time to give my readers some idea of the personal appearance of the young pair who had just come into this dreary old home.

This Murdok Horah was like all the men of his race, so that to describe him is to describe all.

He was six feet in height, and stalwart in proportion. He had Roman features, a swarthy complexion, jet-black hair and beard, jet-black eyes, arched with heavy, black brows. He wore a suit of dark gray tweed. His air was

arrogant and supercilious; his tone, abrupt and peremptory.

His wife was his opposite in all respects. She was as much below the average height of women as he was above that of men, yet she was so perfectly proportioned that her admirers called her "a liliputian Venus." Her features were regular and delicate, her complexion fair, with a faint rose flush on cheeks and lips. Her eyes were as blue as harebells, fringed by dark brown lashes, and arched by slender brows. All around her forehead curled light yellow hair, that was so bright and shining that it would be no mere poetic figure to call it "golden." Her face and head were beautiful and bright, yet of dainty coloring. When Old Si put her beauty "on de banjo," he compared that lovely face to a "posey of lilies, roses, violets and daffodils," for it had all these colors in it. She now wore a simple traveling suit of fine, dark green cashmere, that set off the dainty style of her "posey" beauty.

As her husband led her to a chair, and bent tenderly over her, and she looked up smilingly into his face, it was obvious to all the servants present that the young pair were still quite "madly in love with each other."

"Shall I show you to your room, my Belle? Or will you go to supper first?" he inquired.

"Oh, to supper," she answered, gayly; for, although she really would have liked to get some of the railway dust off her face and out of her eyes, yet she knew the hungry haste of her husband to satisfy his appetite, even at the expense of cleanliness, and she was already accustomed to divine his wishes and to defer to them.

He was too dull, or too selfish, to see through any sacrifice she might make for him, so without hesitation he turned to the waiting housekeeper and gave orders that the supper should be placed on the table at once. Then, with a sudden recollection of his wife's position in the household, he turned again to her, and said:

"After to-night, my Belle, you will give the only orders to your housekeeper and waiting women." And he gave her his arm and led her out to the dining room.

Such was the bringing home of the young wife and infant son to Horah Hall.

CHAPTER II.

HORROR AT HORAH HALL.

Twice it called, so, so loudly called,
With horrid strength beyond the pitch of nature
And "Murder! Murder!" was the dreadful cry.
A third time it returned with feeble strength,
But on a sudden ceased, as though the words
Were smothered rudely in the grappled throat,
And all was still again save the wild blast
Which at a distance growled.
Oh, it will never from my mind depart,
That dreadful cry, all in the instant stilled!—BAILLIE.

But neither marriage nor paternity, neither the beautiful young wife nor the pretty baby boy—both of whom he loved as well as he was capable of loving anybody, or anything but himself—had power to win him from the wickedness of his ways, or in the very least degree restrain his passion for riotous living, deep drinking and high playing.

In the midst of the sublime and beautiful scenery of his mountain home, in the glorious summer time, he revived all those godless revels for which "Hurrah Hall" had been famous, or, rather, infamous.

He filled the house with male guests. He gave "stag" suppers, which were really gambling parties, every alternate night.

Very few of his evil companions were drawn from his neighborhood, however. As has been hinted, the Horahs, of Horah Hall, were disliked, disapproved and dreaded in their own county. Mothers deprecated their example for sons, wives for husbands, and sisters for brothers; so none of the county men who had any respect for their womenkind would have anything to do with "Hurrah Hall," or anything to say to Murdok Horah.

And yet, here and there, in the vicinity of the hall, might be found one or two young men, rebels against parental authority, or, recusants to connubial confidence, who had permitted themselves to be corrupted by the evil owners of the hall, and who were now *habitués* of its nightly orgies.

But the majority of Murdok Horah's fellow friends

were drawn from the neighboring towns and distant cities. These men came in squads, and stayed days and weeks, feasting noisily, drinking excessively, and gambling ruinously; and then went away, to be succeeded by another "squad" as bad or worse than themselves.

But what did the young wife think of all this—say to all this? She thought little, and said less. In fact, she had seen in her father's lifetime something like high living, but nothing approaching these saturnalias. These were much higher than anything she had heard of in her father's house. For, though the late and widowed general kept a sort of bachelor's hall in his house in Washington, and gave frequent gentlemen's parties, they were decorous even while convivial. But as Isabel had never been present at either her father's or her husband's "stag" parties, she could not appreciate all the difference there was between them. It was all right, she supposed. If it seemed rather excessive, it was only a country gentleman's way of living. She knew little of what happened at these "stag" suppers—these orgies held almost every night in the long dining room on the ground floor of the left side of the hall, and which the servants who waited on them characterized as "disgraceful carryings on" of the master and his evil companions. Her chamber was on the second floor of the right side, and as she usually retired with the child before the nightly saturnalia began, she could scarcely hear a sound of revelry so far off.

Besides this, she loved and confided in her handsome husband, and could see no fault in him, especially as he was one of those exceptional men, who, because of vigorous health, can drink deeply without becoming intoxicated.

Every night after these excesses he came to her sober, and—as he generally won at cards—cheerful. While every night several of his boon companions would have to be carried off to bed by the menservants. Of this the mistress knew nothing. It would have been as much as the life, or as the skin, of any servant was worth to tell tales of their master or his comrades, even if love and respect for their young mistress had not held them silent on any subject which would certainly have distressed and humiliated her. She always met her husband's guests at the breakfast table. And if one or two of them failed to

put in an appearance at the breakfast table, "a sick headache" or "a bad cold" was a sufficient excuse for the absentee.

Sometimes the young wife wondered why there were only male guests in the house, why none of the county ladies ever called on her—a stranger bride, come to their neighborhood—as etiquette, kindness, and even Christian fellowship, demanded that they should. When she mentioned the subject to her husband, he carelessly answered:

"Oh, there are really no neighbors of any account very near us. The most considerable family here is the furthest off. They are the Pryors, of The Notches; but there are no ladies there. And the roads are in a shocking condition since the spring freshets, you know, and the road commissioners in this Heaven-forsaken place never do their duty, even if they understand it, which I doubt."

His explanation quite satisfied her. Sometimes, when she looked lonely, he would add:

"This perfect rest from all social duties will do you good, my Belle. This winter, when we go to Washington, you will be as fresh as any new rosebud that may bloom in society for the season."

So she made the best of her social isolation; gave herself up to the care of her child, her household and her husband—when she could have his company, which was seldom more than an hour or two out of the twenty-four.

She was beautiful and fond of dress, and she possessed a fine, artistic taste; but she adorned herself only for the eyes of her husband and her child.

She had not even been to the parish church. She wished to go thither on the first Sabbath after her return, but Mr. Horah told her that the roads were quite impassable.

It was a falsehood, of course. An enemy of all religion, he was very much opposed to her going to church; but, being still very much infatuated with her, he shrank from openly opposing her wish, especially in this matter, which he shrewdly supposed she would make an affair of conscience. So he made it appear that the gratification of her desire was next to a physical impossibility on account of the bad condition of the roads.

In her blind adoration of her husband she believed him.

and was satisfied. From this feeling of self-complacency she was destined to have a cruel awakening. There was nothing to prepare her for the terrible shock. Ah! there never is any warning of that which is destined to lay waste our fortunes, or our happiness, or to alter the whole course of our lives.

It was a lovely evening in July. The full moon was silvering the top of the pine-clothed mountains and sparkling on the rills and springs that trickled down their steeps, and filling the vale with a soft, bright light.

The young mother had retired to her chamber, attended by the nurse, who carried the baby in her arms. As soon as they reached the room, the young mother took her seat in the rocking-chair and held out her arms for the babe. She undressed him, put on his nightgown, and then began to rock and sing him to sleep, after the manner of fond young mothers.

Delphine, or Delphie, as the young nurse was commonly called, busied herself with folding up the garments and "tidying up" the room.

At length the young mother laid her sleeping babe in its cradle, gently touched the rocker, and sang a few low notes of the nursery song in a voice that slowly fell lower, and lower, and lower, until it ceased in silence as she withdrew her foot from the rocker and let the cradle sway to stillness. Then she glided to her easy-chair by the open, moonlit window, and sat looking out on the lovely scene and taking in its deep beauty.

She knew that there was a gentleman's party, as, in her ignorance, she called the disreputable "stag" suppers, going on in the long dining room. Only the distant sound of laughter came faintly on her ear at times, as some more than usually evil jest roused their mirthfulness to noisy hilarity.

Beguiled by the beauty and glory of the moonlit mountains and valley, she sat gazing in pleasant reverie on the scene, forgetful of the passing time, until suddenly the sound of the banjo under her window stole softly on her ear.

Delphine, with a giggle, rose from her sitting posture on the floor, and passed her mistress, stepping through the open window out upon the roof of the piazza.

"Where are you going, Delphine?" she inquired, in surprise.

"On'y outside de windy, Miss Belle," she answered, with another conscious giggle.

"You will risk your life."

"Oh, no, Miss Belle; de ruff ain't sloping 'nuff fo' dat."

"But what are you doing there at all?"

"He, he he! It's on'y dat fool nigger, Si," she answered, as the notes of the prelude softly sank, and the deep, rich voice of the plantation minstrel rose, and, to the accompaniment of his banjo, he sang the following improvised serenade to the mistress of his soul:

"Delphie, darlin' ob my heart,
List to me whilst I impart—
Hear me kindly while I play—
De far-chu-lou! de foo-chu-lay!

"I hab neider house nor lan's—
Hear me kindly while I play—
But lubbin' heart an' willin' han's,
De far-chu-lou! de foo-chu-lay!

"I hab neider fame nor gole—
Lissen kindly while I play—
But my lub will ne'er grow cole—
De far-chu-lou! de foo-chu-lay!

"Delphie, darlin' ob my life—
Lissen kindly while I play—
Will you be my lubbin' wife?
De far-chu-lou! de foo-chu-lay!"

How tragedy and comedy, burlesque and catastrophe tread on each other's heels. An ocean steamer, full of prosperous voyagers enjoying life every day, strikes a sunken rock and goes down with all on board. A train of cars, full of passengers bent on business or enjoyment, suddenly, "in the twinkling of an eye," collides with a freight train, and goes to destruction. A theater, full of gay pleasure seekers, absorbed in the comedy or tragedy of the mimic scene on the stage, and with not the faintest provision of the more tremendous tragedy at hand, suddenly takes fire, and, in the wild terror and confusion that ensues, the frenzied struggle for escape, some are trampled, some smothered, and some burn to death.

It was while lovesick Si was still sighing out his soul in song to the accompaniment of his tuneful banjo—while Delphie was listening in flattered vanity, if not in responsive passion—and the young mistress was enjoying the scene in quietly laughing at both—that a pistol shot rang through the air, startling the quiet party into wild terror, for it was followed by another, and another in quick succession, and by loud and angry voices and rushing steps.

The minstrel dropped his banjo; Delphia ran into the room, and the young wife sprang to her feet.

All hurried without a word spoken—for they were too terror-stricken for words—toward the scene of the unknown horror.

Isabel was in advance. Out of the room, down the stairs, across the hall, and to the door of the long dining room, where the noise and confusion was now rising to a tempest.

"Doane go in dar, young mist'ess! Oh, fu de Lor' a'mighty sake, doane yer go, young mist'ess, honey!" pleaded Brush, the butler, standing before the closed door of the dining room, where the storm still raged, and holding out both arms deprecatingly toward her.

But Isabel, frenzied by terror, and with the strength of frenzy, hurled the man aside, burst open the door and rushed into the awful scene.

The storm, which was at its height when she appeared, suddenly fell into a boding calm. Men looked at her in silent pity and dismay. They crowded around some objects in the center of the room, as if they would have hidden it from her sight. One or two took gentle hold of her, as if they would have led her from the room; but she broke from them and pushed through the group, saw what lay upon the carpet, and, with a piercing shriek, fell prone to the floor.

And well she might. On the carpet lay the bodies of two men in a little lake of blood. They were quite dead. One of them was Murdok Horah. The other was a stranger. Around them was a crowd of half-sobered revelers, talking, disputing and swearing about the catastrophe, as to who was to blame, or the most to be blamed.

The negro butler, assisted by Delphie, lifted the poor lady from the floor, while the half-drunken men shrank

back as if afraid to touch her, and bore her upstairs, where Brush left her in charge of Delphie and Dozia, while he himself went downstairs, out to the stables, saddled the fastest horse, and rode off to Mistyrock, the mountain village, to wake up the family physician, and summon the county constable.

It was midnight when the old man started on his errand. The distance between Horah Hall and Mistyrock was thirteen miles, over and up and down the steeps, and through the most rugged of mountain passes.

Thus it was sunrise when the three horsemen—the doctor, the constable and the old negro—rode into the yard. They dismounted, and gave the horses into the charge of old Si, and walked into the hall.

But all the guests had departed, like evil birds of night, frightened off by the daylight. There was no one to be seen but the terrified, half-paralyzed servants, who were huddled together in the front hall, with the front door open as if for their better protection while keeping guard in the evil house.

"How is your mistress?" was the first question asked by the physician.

"She hasn't spoke since she fainted away in the dinin' room, sah. I just dis minit come down yere to see if you had 'riv, sah," replied the girl, Delphie, who had been sent by the housekeeper, Aunt Dozia, to watch for the arrival of the doctor and to bring him immediately to the bedside of the unconscious lady, where she herself kept anxious guard.

"In a moment," said Dr. Hawkins, as he followed the constable and the old butler into the fatal dining room, to look at the prostrate forms. He could then make but a very cursory examination. He knelt down beside each corpse, in turn felt the pulse and heart, but neither pulse nor heart responded by the weakest motion.

"But it was scarcely necessary to do that, Mr. Bowen," he said, turning to the constable, and pointing to the shattered skulls of the victims of their own evil passions; "for when the brains are out the man is dead, beyond a doubt, you know. Now we must not disturb these bodies until they shall be viewed by the coroner. My good girl, show

me the way to your mistress' room," he added, turning suddenly to the horror-stricken Delphine, who courtesied and obeyed.

The doctor found his patient in a deathlike swoon. The only sign of life was the feeble, almost intangible pulse. He sat by her side and labored with her until at length she partially recovered consciousness, but almost immediately fell into convulsions; a new phase of her malady, which the doctor had to combat as well as he could. He remained beside the poor lady until the demands of his many other patients compelled him to leave her to the care of her old housekeeper, in whose skill and fidelity he had great confidence, and with whom he left careful directions for the treatment of the sufferer.

The house of the tragedy was now in the possession of the legal authorities. The coroner, who had been notified by the constable, arrived in the course of the morning, and found no difficulty in impaneling a jury, as the news of the tragedy, spreading through the neighborhood, drew crowds to the house.

But it was impossible to hold an inquest that day, owing to the difficulty of summoning witnesses from among the guests who were present at the time of the tragedy, but who were now dispersed in all directions. So the room of crime and death was put under the guard of a couple of deputy constables, and locked up for the night.

The coroner's inquest was held the next day.

The facts of the case, as they came out in evidence, were, briefly, these: This particular "stag" party had been gotten up especially for the fleecing of a foolish young fellow named Harland, who had just come into his estate, and had more money than he knew what to do with, and was possessed by an insane desire to figure as a fast young man—a man of the world—meaning the worst half of the world. He had heard of the famous frolics at "Hurrah Hall," and was very anxious to be one of the favored guests. This came to the ears of Murdok Horah, together with the information that the poor, young simpleton was burdened with an immense fortune that he was eager to get rid of. This drew forth an invitation from Mr. Horah that brought the young man down from Rich-

mond in the company of a mutual "friend," who escorted him to the hall, and presented him to the master of the house on the evening of that fatal party.

The supper that night had been more prolonged than usual; the drinking had been deeper, and, after supper, gambling had been higher and more ruinous to the victims than ever before. Much money was lost and won. Success seemed, with the help of brandy, to make even the cautious sharpers perfectly reckless in their dishonesty and artifices. There was not a man present who was sober except Murdok Horah, whom no amount of spirituous liquors could intoxicate. Murdok Horah was perfectly sober, if, indeed, he could be called sober whose inherited temperament was a powder magazine, which any accidental spark might ignite and explode, with more or less disaster to those concerned.

That night, while Murdok Horah was not in the least degree under the influence of alcohol, young Wilful Harland was the most intoxicated man present. He was also a man who was very quarrelsome and insulting when maddened by strong drink. He was in just such a condition then. He had lost a large sum of money—more even than he could well afford—and he had lost it to his host. He grew very angry, insolent and accusatory. He scarcely knew what he said. He called Murdok Horah a sharper, a rogue and a blackleg. He said that Horah Hall was no better than a gambling hell.

This roused all the ungovernable fury of the family temper. In an instant of madness, Murdok Horah jerked his revolver from his pocket and shot his assailant dead. Then, as the victim dropped to the floor, like lightning flashed upon the murderer pictures in fire of all the consequences that must follow his evil deed. Arrest, imprisonment, trial, conviction, the State's prison, or the gallows. He, with all his evils, was no coward, but he was too proud, haughty and arrogant to submit to the disgrace of arrest and imprisonment, which he knew must be his next experience, whatever might be the final result of the trial, for a murderer is not a bailable criminal. Death rather—instant death! In one second, before his horror-stricken companions, who had started to their feet, could spring forward to prevent him, he had turned the deadly

weapon upon himself, fired two shots in rapid succession, and had fallen beside his victim.

The coroner's jury brought in a verdict in accordance with the evidence, namely, "that Wilful Harland came to his death by a bullet shot into his brain from a pistol held in the hand of Murdok Helman Horah; and that Murdok Helman Horah came to his death by two bullets in his body, shot from a pistol held in his own hand."

The body of the murderer and suicide was finally laid in the family vault of the Horahs at the Church of St. Ignatius, at Mistyrock, and that of his victim was sent to his friends in Richmond.

All this time the wretched young widow had lain unconscious of all that had been going on around her. Her deathlike swoon had been followed by a brain fever that had lasted all through the coroner's inquest, and all through the funeral ceremonies that followed. These ceremonies were conducted by the rector of St. Ignatius, under the direction of the family physician. There was really no relative of the Horahs in the neighborhood, and no acquaintance intimate enough to take direction of the affair.

CHAPTER III.

CELIA AND YOUNG MURDOK.

This should have been a noble creature. She
Hath all the energy which would have made
A goodly frame of glorious elements,
Had they been wisely mingled. As it is,
It is an awful chaos—light and darkness,
And mind and dust—and passions and pure thoughts,
Mixed and contending, without end or order,
All dormant, or destructive. She will perish;
And yet she must not. Such are worth redemption.

—BYRON.

Isabel Horah's illness proved to be long and tedious. Her neighbors, who had almost cruelly ignored the young wife who had come a stranger to their neighborhood, now called at the hall with interested inquiries as to the condition of the hapless widow, with friendly offers of service.

But there was no one except the servants to receive them there, unless they chanced to meet the family physician on one of his daily visits. There were only the housekeeper and the maids to take care of her.

Doubtless the poor young sufferer had friends and relations at a distance, who would have been summoned, and who would have flown to her aid, but no one knew where to address them. So isolated had been her life at Horah Hall that no one in the vicinity knew anything whatever about her family or kindred, or any human being upon whom she might have claim in this, her time of sorrow and desolation.

But she had a skillful physician, a trained nurse, and youth and a good constitution on her side, and so she began to recover. Her first conscious cry was a call for her babe; and when the child was put in her arms, as she lay on the bed, although she had not strength enough to clasp him to her heart, she smiled, for the first time since her sore affliction, to see how wonderfully plump and rosy the baby was.

"Murdok Horah's son!" she murmured, fondly; "Murdok Horah's dear son. All that is left me of Murdok Horah!"

Here the child began to cry.

"He doesn't know me! My baby doesn't know me!" wailed the poor invalid, with the petulance of illness. "He is afraid of me!"

"Oh, no, he isn't, young mist'ess, but you see he hasn't seed yo' so long, and yo's pale now, an' de room's dark, an' he wants some 'tention," said Aunt Dozia, as she gently withdrew the babe from the invalid's failing arms, and carried him from the room.

But the child did not seem to get over his repugnance to the pale lady, or to the dark room, but cried more or less every time he was brought to her bed.

She was yet much too ill to ask questions, or to think of any questions to ask; but a few days later, while she was caressing and trying to pacify the fine, hearty-looking baby, she inquired of Aunt Dozia how they fed him, since they had taken him away from her bosom while she was so very ill, that now he was thriving so well.

"'Celia nusses ob him, young mist'ess," replied the housekeeper.

"Celia?" inquired Isabel, lifting her eyebrows.

"Yes, young mist'ess, Celia, Aa'on's widdy, you know."

"No, I don't know; I never heard of her."

"Well, now, sho' nuff; how would you? Aa'on was one ob de fiel' han's, an' Celia is de poultry 'oman, an' libs in dat little log house back ob de barnyard," Aunt Dozia explained.

"And she nurses my child, Murdok Horah's son!" exclaimed the lady, in displeasure.

"Dere wan't nobody else to do it, young mist'ess; it was de doctor's own orders. An' which Cely's a fine, healfy, hansom' young 'oman as yo'd see in hund'ed years."

"And the child has been sent to that log house to be nursed!" again indignantly exclaimed the lady.

"Lor' bress you, no, young mist'ess. Cely done come an' stop in de house eber sence you was took ill, an' she had to take care ob de young mars'er. An', oh, doane dat baby frive on her milk? An' ain't he just 'woted to her!"

"But the woman's own child? What becomes of it? Or, has she milk enough for both?" inquired the lady.

"Ah, young mist'ess, dat oder chile, he's gone to glory—playin' on de golden harp 'long ob de cherrybeams and saryfines," replied old Dozia.

"Dead!" sighed Isabel, in a low, sympathetic tone.

"Lor', no, mist'ess! I'se a poor, ignoran' darky, but I aine sich a headen as to call dat little angil dead 'cause he's gone away an' us can't see him yere. No, dat chile's gone to glory, singin' on de golden harp."

"When did that child die? What did he die of?" inquired little Murdok's mother, uneasily—for he might have had some contagious disease which, if the death was recent, her child might have contracted, she thought.

"He wur tuk jes two or three days arter yo' was tuk ill, young mist'ess. An' de messinger wat was sent to fetch him home was a information on de brain. Leas'-ways dat wur what de doctor say it wur."

"Poor Celia! poor, bereaved mother! to lose her baby and then have to take another child!"

"It is a comfort dat de chile is your'n, mist'ess."

"Go and call Celia to me. I wish to see my child's nurse."

Aunt Dozia went out and soon returned with the young woman.

Isabel raised her eyes and saw before her a tall, finely developed, handsome quadroon, who might have passed for a Spanish or an Italian beauty of high rank, so perfect was her form and face, so rich her complexion, so queenly her carriage.

But what held the lady spellbound for a moment was the woman's amazing likeness to Murdok Horah. For that moment she could not speak while the woman stood courtesying.

"You are Celia?" questioned the lady, when she had recovered her power of speaking.

"Yes, ma'am," replied the woman, with another courtesy.

"Who are your father and mother, Celia?" wistfully inquired the lady.

"My mother is Judith, ma'am."

"And your father?" more pointedly inquired the widow.

The rich, red life current rushed up, crimsoning bosom, throat and face. Her head drooped as she answered, in a low tone:

"My father died three years ago, ma'am."

Some instinct warned the lady not to press the question further.

The child, too, who had been uneasy all this time, now began to cry and struggle, and hold out its arms to his foster mother.

"Take him!" cried the invalid, impatiently. "You have won his love from me, and now I cannot satisfy him."

"Oh, no, indeed, ma'am, I have not won his love from you. He only wants his dinner. Little babies are like little animals, you know, ma'am," said the woman, as she received the child from her mistress' arms and began to soothe him tenderly.

Isabel watched them with a jealous pang, saw the child nestle to the woman's bosom, saw the woman bend her head down till it touched the child's head. Then suddenly she remembered the poor woman's bereavement, and pity cast out jealousy.

"I am sorry to hear that you have lost your own child, my poor Celia," she said.

The woman burst into tears. Then Aunt Dozia came forward with all a sick nurse's authority, and said:

"Now, really, young mist'ess, you mus' let Cely take de chile out o' dis room. Dis yere 'citement is gwine fo' to make yo' wuz. An' de doctor'll blame me."

Dozia had her way, for her mistress fell back exhausted on her pillow, weeping, and the nurse carried her little charge away.

Dozia's fears were not without foundation. Isabel had a slight relapse that required the repose of the next few days. During this time she was troubled by the striking likeness between the handsome quadroon and the late Murdok Horah, and also by the consequent likeness of her own dear boy to the same quadroon; for the little Murdok, if not "the image of his father," as the servants called him, was, certainly, as much like that father as an infant could possibly be to a man.

When she was well enough to question the servants as to all that had happened during her illness, she did not hear the terrible truth. Not one of them had the courage, or the cruelty, to tell her about the coroner's inquest, or the verdict that left so deep a stain on the memory of her husband. They talked of the splendor of the funeral, and of the kindness of the neighbors. When, later, she questioned Dr. Hawkins, her physician, on the same subject, he mercifully and most skillfully evaded her inquiries by telling her that the tragedy was the result of a quarrel over a game of cards, in which Mr. Wilful Harland had accused her husband of false play. Thus, without saying so in plain words, the doctor left the widow under the impression that the antagonists had settled their quarrel on the spot by fighting a duel with pistols across the table. She questioned no one else on the subject, and so she never learned the horrible truth—at least, not then—from her household, or from the neighbors. But she was firmly convinced, by her blind worship of Murdok Horah, that the murderer and suicide was in reality a hero and a martyr, the victim of an assassin, who fastened a quarrel upon him with premeditated murder in his heart, and who was, therefore, as bloodthirsty an assassin as if he had

waylaid his victim in the dark and stabbed him to death in the back. The only consolation she had was the sinful reflection that the assassin had also fallen by his victim's bullet.

And still that likeness of the handsome quadroon to her deceased husband troubled her.

She was rather too proud a woman to make confidants of her servants, for it never occurred to her that they were neighbors—indeed, sisters and brothers. But her interest and curiosity got the better of her pride and prudence, and, one day, when she found herself alone with old Aunt Dozia, she suddenly inquired, as if she could not trust herself to wait, lest she should shrink from the question:

"Who was Celia's father?"

Dozia started and looked scared.

The lady repeated the question.

"Lor' A'mighty knows, youn' mist'ess, for I doane."

Mrs. Horah gave her a penetrating look, and then remarked:

"There are some strange resemblances in this world. Accidental, of course. Now, here is my son's nurse, who bears a most wonderful likeness to my husband. They seem about the same age."

This involuntary allusion to the dead, of whom she could not yet speak with composure, completely overcame the young widow, so that it was some time before she spoke again. Then she asked:

"If you have been on the plantation all your life, as well as Celia and her mother, you must know who her father was."

"Well, den, I doane, young mist'ess. What one 'spects, one doane kno', yo' see," stubbornly replied the old woman.

"What do you mean by that?"

"Youn' mist'ess, if yo' was to take yo' walks ober dis yere plantashun, yo'd see mo' gals an' boys, an' men an' women, too, as is de libbin' images ob de Horahs, dan dere ebber was real Horahs in de worl'. An' dey doane look like we, dem darkies, an' dey doane talk like we, neder. Dere's Cely talks like any white lady. An' she nebber had

a day's schoolin' in her life, ob course, 'ca'se it is agin' de law ob de State."

Isabel spoke no further, but thought more.

The young widow, in the bitterness of a rebellious and vengeful spirit, retired from the world, secluded herself even from her now kindly disposed neighbors, and devoted herself to nursing her sorrow and hatred, and to petting and spoiling her son—"Murdok Horah's son," as in her fond idolatry of her departed "hero" she called the boy.

That poor child! I have a very deep pity for him, and for all like him. What chance had he, indeed, to develop into anything but a little devil? When I think of him, and of such as he was, I am inspired to hope that there is a world of probation beyond this, or a reincarnation here to give the bound, starved, ill-used soul further opportunity for redemption. This unfortunate child, with all his inherited evils, and with the wealth and power to which he was born, required the wisest teaching and the firmest restraint. But he received neither from his doting mother. She loved him as her own child, but she worshiped him as Murdok Horah's son.

Very soon—as soon as the doctor would consent to the change—she sent his nursing mother back to her cabin and to the care of the poultry yard, and she herself assumed the sole charge of the child, with no assistance than that of Delphie. But the little one fretted and pined, and refused to be soothed, so that Celia had to be recalled.

"I must gradually separate them. It is too hard to lose my husband in that cruel way, and then to lose the love of my child as well!" she complained.

But, with all her natural longing, and all her sweet, maternal arts, she failed to detach the child from his nursing mother, whom he loved with passionate devotion even after the baby had developed into the romping boy.

Young tigers, bears and lions do not always show their ferocity in their cubhood; neither did young Murdok Horah. The little beasts of prey are often playful and engaging; so was little Murdok Horah. He was a very beautiful boy, and his doting mother and loving nurse thought him just the most wonderful and enchanting creature the sun ever shone upon.

But then what else should Murdok Horah's son be?

So she was totally blind to those first small developments of evil that might have warned her that she was training—not a little angel, but a little demon. The mother thought her son not only a beauty, but also a saint and a genius.

When he reached the age at which he should be taught to read, she would not send him to school, but engaged a tutor to give him private instruction at home. I should rather say tutors, for though they came one at a time, yet there was quite a procession of them, coming and going in absurdly rapid succession. These tutors were obtained by advertisement, and were selected from the rank and file of that honorable army of self-helping young graduates of the public schools who go to the Southern plantations to become tutors in planters' families, to earn money to pay for their future college courses. They are the class from which many of our great statesmen, jurists, divines and other lights of the world come, who seldom or never spring from the wealthy classes.

But no tutor with the slightest respect for himself, or regard for his duties, could remain long at Horah Hall. For the pupil of seven years old was an untamed young savage, an irreclaimable little rebel. He had not the slightest idea of duty or obedience. After the fun and novelty wore off, he would at any moment, when the fancy struck him, seize his primer in his teeth and tear it up, fling the fragments on the floor, then burst out laughing, turn a somersault, and thus literally kick up his heels in the face of authority, and scamper away from the room and off to the woods, in company with some of the negro boys, to set traps for rabbits, or look for those already caught in the snares.

In vain would the tutor talk to the boy or appeal to the mother. She would not permit any coercion to be brought to bear upon the young rebel. Nothing but moral suasion should be exercised to influence Murdok Horah's son.

But how was moral suasion to be understood by a boy whose moral sense had never been developed?

So tutor after tutor, unable to perform his duty by the young pupil under these trying circumstances, resigned his charge and left Horah Hall.

It was when this wild and headstrong boy was in his eleventh year that an event happened which was destined to exercise a powerful influence on the young savage and all connected with him.

CHAPTER IV.

AT THE OLD GODFREY FARM.

Oh, poverty is a bitter thing. It burdeneth the brain;
It causes even the little child to murmur and complain.
—MARY HOWITT.

The old Godfrey farm is situated on the south bank of the Patuxent River; its grounds running down to the water's edge, and back to what colored people called "de big woods," which was a part of the primeval forest of St. Mary's County, in Maryland.

The estate consisted of an old tumble-down farmhouse, built of brick and wood, and about twenty acres of much-worn land. Once the estate covered a thousand acres of field and forest, with a long frontage of fishing ground on the river. Then could the master of the manor stand on the highest hill of his land and say that all around, from the center to the circumference of his vision, was his property. He might have said with truth, "I am lord of all I survey!"

But these prosperous days were long past, and now the family were very poor, unable to repair their decaying homestead, unable to pay their honest debts—nay, even worse than that, they were obliged to contract new ones in order to live from day to day.

From generation to generation, little by little, they had parted with portions of their land, till now nothing was left but the small tract mentioned.

What had brought them to this pass?

Not vice, certainly; but a rather liberal hospitality, carelessness of money and inattention to business. Slight faults, but, like moths, eating slowly into their substance. And the land in every instance was sold to save the slaves.

No Godfrey ever sold a slave. He or she would almost as soon have sold one of their own children. They had been slaveholders, indeed, from father to son; from mother to daughter, from the introduction of slavery into the country. They inherited their position of ownership and authority over their dark brethren, and received it as the inevitable matter of course in the order of events.

And yet the word slave was odious to the Godfreys.

Much deserved ridicule has been cast upon that so-called "patriarchal institution," but the home rule of the Godfreys was, indeed, and in truth, patriarchal.

They never called their human property "slaves" or "negroes," but ever alluded to them almost affectionately as "our colored people," or, if they were employed in the house, "our maids," or "our menservants," or if in the field, "our hands."

The darkies of the plantation always called the elder members of the family "ole marsa," or "ole miss," as the case might be; and the younger ones as "young Marse" or "young Miss" So-and-so, according to their Christian names, but always with a tender, almost patronizing tone, as if service meant protection.

Whenever any Godfrey came to die, young or old, there were nowhere any more sincere or inconsolable mourners than the colored people, those children of passion and emotion, who can seldom assume and never control feeling.

A hereditary bond of strong affection, coming down the generations, bound the masters and servants of this estate with bonds deeper and stronger than any law could forge.

A woeful crisis was at hand at the old Godfrey farm. Creditors were importunate. The house and land were mortgaged to their full value, or so near it that not another dollar could be raised upon it. The holders of the mortgages threatened to foreclose if the long arrears were not paid. The general storekeeper talked of obtaining an execution to satisfy the debt owing to him of several years standing.

The Godfrey family now consisted of an aged couple and two bachelor sons. There was no daughter, but there was a mulatto girl who was like a daughter to her dear old mistress.

One word of this girl: About seventeen years before, one of the colored women, named Servia, the daughter of one of the field hands, and living in a cabin on the plantation, gave birth to a mulatto child and died. Such an event was very rare on that estate, and the only reason the frail mother was forgiven by her fellow servants was because she died. The old lady, Mrs. Grace Godfrey, took the tiny, motherless babe into the house and made a pet of it. She called it Servia, after its mother, and brought it up at her knee.

Servia grew and thrived, and became the greatest help and comfort of the poor, daughterless old lady's life. The lady began to teach the child, as soon as she was old enough to learn, such useful accomplishments as might fit her for a lady's maid. She not only taught her to do plain and fine needlework, lace making and embroidery, but also to read and write, and to cast accounts.

Thus, at the age of seventeen, Servia was Mrs. Godfrey's right-hand and inseparable companion. She slept on a cot in her mistress' chamber, as, indeed, she had done from infancy—with this difference—that then she was to be taken care of by her mistress, now she was to take care of that mistress. She made and repaired all the old lady's caps and gowns, and in their impoverished days there was much more skillful repairing and making up to be done. She wrote all her mistress' notes and letters, kept all her accounts, and read to her whenever they could get anything to read. That, however, was very seldom, for books at that time and place were rare and costly. She went with her mistress wherever the latter had occasion to go, whether it was to church, shop or a neighbor's house. She might enter a shop with her mistress, of course, but at the church vestibule she had to leave the lady to go alone to her pew, while she climbed up to the colored people's gallery; and at a neighbor's house she had to leave her mistress as the latter passed into the parlor, while she went to the kitchen. There was no great hardship in these things, nor did Servia consider it so.

Meanwhile, from constant and intimate association with her mistress, and from her reading, she had contracted a refinement of speech and manner very unusual among her class.

At seventeen, also, Servia was a very attractive young woman. She was not exactly beautiful, but she was something even better than that.

She was tall, strong, finely proportioned and handsome, with a healthy, cream-colored complexion, dark brown hair and brown eyes, and full, red lips. One of her pleasures, not to call it by a stronger word—passions—was her love for the water. When she was still a child, whenever her mistress would send her out into the fresh air to play, she would go down to the river side, pull off her shoes and stockings, and tuck up her skirts, and wade into the water; or, if she were sure that no one was looking, she would take off her clothes and plunge into the water.

In this way, it must have been, that she learned, without any instruction, the art of swimming, as animals learn it. And as she grew up it became her custom to go down to the river every summer evening and take a swim. If, as sometimes happened, the tide was high and the water rough, she delighted in it all the more. It was to this habit that she owed her robust health and great muscular vigor. And to this she also owed, as one of its results, the greatest happiness of her life. Her mistress knew that she took a bath in the river every evening, and approved the cleanly and healthful habit, but she did not know her as the strong and skillful swimmer that she was.

Servia's fine form and face and stately carriage had attracted much attention in the neighborhood, and, unhappily, at this crisis, fell under the notice of a slave trader.

This man, Wharton by name, was canvassing the locality to gather his peculiar merchandise. So when he heard of the sheriff's sale on the Godfrey farm, he was among the first to attend. A wink and a tip to the auctioneer caused the mulatto girl, Servia, to be put up early in the proceedings. Wharton outbid every competitor, for he was sure of a large profit on his investment, and he became the proud possessor of the stately mulatto girl.

Poor Servia, overwhelmed with shame and sorrow, was permitted the sad privilege of going to bid good-by to her old mistress.

The girl, like all her emotional race, had little or no self-control.

She burst into her mistress' bedchamber, where the old

lady lay in bed, prostrated by the ruin that had overtaken her house, threw herself on her knees by the bedside, dropped her face on the quilt, and burst into a passion of tears, sobs and lamentations.

Old Grace Godfrey, who had passed more than her three score and ten years, and was very feeble in body, though strong in spirit, put out her arms and laid her hands on the head of the girl as in silent benediction, while she waited for the hysterical fit to pass.

"Oh, my mistress! the degradation! the degradation!" exclaimed the girl, with a gasping sob, as she at length rose from her knees and wiped the tears from her eyes. "To be put up at public auction, and stared at, and turned about, and knocked down to the highest bidder, and he a common negro buyer!"

"I would have let out the last few sands in the hour-glass of my life to have saved you from this misery, my poor child!" breathed the old lady.

"The degradation!" repeated the girl, in a faint tone.

"No, my child, not that! Were the Christian martyrs degraded when they were sold into slavery, scourged, or thrown alive as food to the wild beasts? No, my child, nothing that can be done to you can degrade you; only what you might be tempted, or frightened, or persecuted into doing yourself. There is no shame but sin. Remember that, my child, and be strong. Suffer—die—rather than sin. Then, child whom I have reared as if of my own flesh and blood, though we may never meet again on this side of the grave, we shall surely meet in our Father's house."

She slipped her hand under her pillow and drew forth a little well-worn book, and handed it to the girl, saying:

"Take our New Testament, Servia. Oh, you will need it, my child; and need its Christ every hour! You have read it daily for me these many years past. It will be a bond of union between us."

Servia, weeping quietly now, took the book and pressed the hand that offered it to her lips.

"Now, there is another thing. Go, dear, to the closet and take my black silk dress and bring it to me."

Servia obeyed.

The old lady took the garment in her hands, and said:

"You made it for me, child, and you have repaired it carefully for me—how many times! Take it, now, and wear it for my sake. It will be another bond of union between us."

"But, dear mistress, this is your best gown."

"That is the reason why I give it to you, my child."

"But it is your church gown, mistress."

"I shall never have the comfort of going to church again, Servia."

The girl's tears were falling like rain.

"But that does not matter so much as it seems. We are each of us a 'temple of the Lord,' and if a temple, then a church in which we can serve and worship Him wherever we may be; even on a bed of sickness or in the prison of the slave trader. Mind that, Servia!"

"Oh, I will! I will!" sobbed the girl.

At this moment there came a sharp rap at the door. Servia went to open it. One of the negroes stood there and said:

"Marse Wharton is ready to start fo' de steamboat, and say how yo' mus' com' right 'long or he'll hab to come an' fetch yo'."

"Come and bid me good-by, my child," said the old lady, rising with difficulty to a sitting position, and holding out her feeble arms.

Servia ran to her, threw her arms around her neck, and burst into a fresh paroxysm of sobs and tears. The old lady clasped the girl to her bosom, but said not a word.

Indeed, she never spoke again. The trials of many years had worn out her heart. Their culmination in this last crash of family ruin had been too much for her feeble condition, and now this last parting from one who had been her constant companion for seventeen years, and who had served her with the devotion of a daughter, who had been cherished as such, and who was now going into a slavery that was more cruel than any form of death, gave old Grace Godfrey her merciful death blow.

Servia felt the feeble frame tremble as she clasped it, then the weak arms relax, and then the worn body slip from her embrace as the aged sufferer, "with the sigh of a great deliverance," sank back into her rest.

"Mistress! mistress!" cried Servia, in great alarm, bending over the still form.

Servia's screams roused the household.

No response came from those stilled lips.

The room was soon filled with the family and the servants—such of them as had not been sold—and they crowded around the bed. Her sons were the first on the spot, and pressed nearest to the bed. They thought the motionless woman lying there had only fainted, but the most cursory examination proved, by the still pulse and heart and the glazed eyes, that she had died.

In the midst of the distress that ensued the voice of Wharton arose—for he had been drawn to the room by the general excitement—and was now saying:

"Gentlemen, I am very sorry, but I have to catch the steamboat at Buckstone's Landing, and I must be off. Come, girl. Now stop that howling, or it will be worse for you." And so saying he took Servia rudely by the arm and hurried her from the room.

The assembled family, gathered around the body of the old lady, rubbing her hands and feet, and calling on her sacred names, "mother" or "mistress," in the hopeless effort to raise the dead, being thus employed, they took no notice of the slave trader, or his property, but let him drag Servia, weeping, from the chamber of death.

CHAPTER V.

ON THE "ERRAND GIRL."

Oh, many a dream was in that ship,
An hour before her death;
And sights of home, with sighs, disturbed
The sleeper's long-drawn breath.
* * * He wakes at the vessel's sudden roll,
And the rush of waters is in his soul.—WILSON.

"Come, come now! None o' that!" growled the rude fellow, who was dragging his prey down the stairs, as she turned and stretched her arms wildly toward the room where the dead body of her mistress lay, as if she would

have fled back to her side. "You just be quiet, will yer? If yer don't want me to knock yer on the head! If you know what's good for yer, yer'll just come along peaceable."

With a deep, wailing sigh, Servia dropped her arms and ceased to resist—if that long, appealing gesture of despair could be called resistance—and allowed the man to lead her downstairs to the covered farm wagon he had hired to convey his purchases to the steamboat landing. In it were already seated three young negro men, who had also been bought by Wharton.

Around the wagon were gathered about half a dozen other negroes, who had escaped the auctioneer's hammer, chiefly because they were considered unprofitable servants, being aged, invalid or infantile.

These were all crying and wringing their hands. Three old mothers were bewailing the three sons whom they could never hope to see, or even hear from again, any more than if they were in their graves.

Wharton shoved Servia into the wagon, and shouted to the driver:

"Go on, Bill! Let's git out of this infernal row!" And, to emphasize his words, he snatched the wagon whip out of the man's hand, and struck it over the head and shoulders of the nearest of the group of negroes, a poor, decrepit old man who was bent over a stick.

The wagon was started at as fast a speed as the cumbrous vehicle would admit. Wharton pulled out a pair of old-fashioned, clumsy horse pistols, examined them, and replaced them in a leather belt around his waist; then mounted the horse that a sickly-looking boy held, and started in the wake of the wagon. They passed out of the great farm gate upon the turnpike road.

There were no seats in the wagon, but its floor was covered with straw. Poor Servia was seated flat upon this straw, with her face covered by her hands, and dropped upon her knees. She neither looked up, nor spoke, until she was addressed by one of her fellow sufferers, who spoke cheerfully, as he supposed.

"Now, doane take on so, Miss Servy, chile! You'll be heap better off 'an we. We's gwine inter de cotton fiel',

I reckon; but yo's gwine ter be some rich lady's own maid! Now, doane yer giv' up like dat, Miss Servy, honey!"

"Oh, hush! hush! Ben! I can't stand it! My heart is broken!" she wailed, without uncovering her face or raising her head.

"Now, doane yer talk like dat 'ere, Miss Servy, honey. Wot make yo' heart bwoke? Yo' ain't lef' no po' ole mammy an' daddy behine you, or sisters or brudders behine, like we has!"

"My mistress!" wailed the girl. "My dear, dear mistress! who was like a mother to me—the only mother I ever knew!" And with the thought, Servia lost all self-control, and broke into such a storm of sobbing and crying that Ben was sorry he had ventured to speak to her, and warned his companions not to try the same experiment while they were on the road.

A drive of two hours brought them to Buckstone's Landing, where they were to embark on the steamboat *Errand Girl*, for Washington.

The boat had not yet arrived, nor was it even in sight. Wharton called one of the hostlers, who was lounging around Buckstone's, as the dilapidated old tavern at the landing was called, and ordered him to go into the barroom and fetch him a brandy smash, for he did not care to leave his guard over the wagon, lest some of the men should take advantage of the situation by running away. The first brandy smash was brought, and when that was imbibed another was ordered, and then a third. Before this was consumed the boat came in sight, and in ten minutes more it reached the wharf. Then there was a final leave-taking between the colored people, as they came out of the wagon, and Bill, the humpbacked driver, who, with the wagon, belonged to Godfrey's farm, was going back.

"Gim my lub to mammy and de chillun, Bill. Tell her not to cwy arter me. Tell her I'll mine wot she say to me, an' I'll nebber git junk, nor break de Sabber day—no, nor nebber gib de back answer to de oberseer; nebber do nothin' wot'ld git me inter chubble, wot'ld grebe her heart if she knowed it. Tell her, Bill, as she may 'pen on me to keep straight as a 'ciple ought 'till we meet in Glory. And tell her, Bill, as I shil chy for to git some yittle white chile as will write a letter for me to her. An', Bill,

fotch de ole 'oman a bucket o' water, sometimes, for my sake, an' cut her a yarmful ob wood, an' take her to lub feasts Sunday evenin's, like I—I—I——"

Here the poor fellow broke quite down with the thought that he could no longer help the poor old mother, who had no other son. And he cried like a child.

" 'Deed, Ben, I'll do eb'ryt'ing you say, same as ef she was my own mudder, as is in Glory," said Bill.

"An', Bill," continued Ben, recovering himself, "doane yer let on to de po' ole woman as I cwyed, doane yer. It would 'mos' break her heart. Yo' tell her dat I went off in sech sperrets. I—yes, an' so I will! Yo' shan' tell no lie."

"Come, come! Stuff and nonsense! Enough of this!" roughly exclaimed Wharton, seizing Ben and shoving him toward the gang plank, which the sailors were just laying down.

"I'll mine eb'ry word you say to me, Ben!" called the driver after his friend.

"T'anky, Bill; God bress yer!" cried Ben.

The other two men went up to the driver, to give him more parting messages to the friends they had left behind forever. But these were cut short by Wharton, who took the arm of Servia, and drove the two men on before, across the gang plank, and on board the steamer.

"Nebber yer mine, Ned an' Jim! I kno' wot yer want to send up to de ole folks jes as well as ef I hearn yer say it, an' I'll tell 'em ebery word fai'ful, 'deed I will."

"Lor, bress yer fo' dat, Bill!" came in a chorus from the negroes on the deck of the steamer.

"Hold yer jaws, you black rascals! and go along down with you!" commanded the trader, hustling the little group before him.

They went as freight; that is, in the hold of the vessel, though with the privilege of climbing to the lower deck for a little fresh air—except when the boat touched a landing, when they were rigorously kept below.

They were all driven down into the hold, to stay until the steamer should start, where they had to look out for themselves by keeping out of the way of descending barrels of corn, sacks of wheat and hogsheads of tobacco, that were let down through the hatchway.

After the freight was all stowed, and the boat well under way, they were allowed to come on deck.

It was now near sunset on a warm September evening. Heavy clouds gathered in the west, and threatened to rise and swallow up the sun before he should drop below the horizon. The three colored men stood at the stern of the steamer, leaning over the bulwarks, and staring in sorrow on the home they were leaving forever. They spoke but little, and that in whispers.

Servia sat apart on a coil of ropes, with her face buried in her hands. Her companions in misfortune dared not speak to her, lest they should bring on another paroxysm of hysterics. There was no one else on the lower deck, except Wharton, who kept near his property, and two deck hands, who were cleaning the deck and talking of the prospects of the weather.

"Look at them clouds over yonder, to the west'ard, Dixon! Dirty weather on the bay to-night, I wouldn't wonder."

"Ay, ay!" replied the other; "that's certain; cap'n have to put into St. Mary's Bay, I reckon."

"He won't do it, then. Not he. Cap'n Travers never stopped fer stress of weather yet! You'll see."

"Well, yer know the cap'n better'n I do, but I reckon I know what I'm talking about when I tell yer if he don't put into St. Mary's Bay to-night, this coming storm will stop us for good and all," said the last speaker, as they passed out of hearing.

Servia had heard all, and, oh, how in her heart she hoped that storm might come and wreck the boat, and rescue her from the degradation she felt to be overwhelming her, notwithstanding all her mistress had said to the contrary. Then came terror at herself, as she thought of what it really was that she so passionately desired. To be rescued at the price of all the innocent lives on board. At the price of that little child's life, whose voice and laugh reached her from the upper deck; of that lady, whose sweet tones mingled with it! Of how many others to whom life was lovely!

"I am just as wicked as anybody else," she said to herself. "Lord forgive them and me! The worst wrong they do to me is the wicked state of mind they put me in."

It was growing dark faster than the fall of night would warrant. The clouds had risen above the low, descending sun, and had entirely hidden it and were rapidly rising toward the zenith. Vivid flashes of lightning, accompanied by low mutterings of thunder, came from the mountainous range of black clouds that seemed to touch the hills of the land that was fast sinking out of sight. A low, sobbing sigh came at intervals across the water.

Presently, by the orders of Wharton, one of the stewards came with a wooden tray, on which were arranged four mugs of coffee and four hunks of corn bread, which he distributed to the four colored people. The men took it and ate hungrily. Servia could not touch a morsel. She had always been accustomed to fare just as her old mistress had; and so she must have been half starved before she could have eaten this coarse food. And in her present condition she could not have swallowed a morsel of the most dainty viands of the earth.

"Couldn't yer fetch her a cup o' tea, youn' marse?" asked Ben, in an humble, coaxing tone, addressing the steward. "She has been raised dainty, she has, alon' o' her ole missus. She aine use to dis yer. I aine got no money, but yere's a bran' new silk han'cher' wot Marse Gilbert gim me fer a keepsake, an' yer kin hab dat."

"I don't want it. I'll bring the tea," said the boy.

And he went away, and soon returned with a cup of tea and a plate of white bread and butter, which he placed upon the deck before the girl.

Servia was feverishly thirsty, and quaffed the tea gratefully, but could not swallow a morsel of solid food.

Meanwhile the lightning began to flash nearer, and the thunder to roll overhead. There was a noise of sailors running to and fro on the upper deck, trimming the boat and preparing for the coming storm.

"Here you! Get down into the hold!" exclaimed Wharton, who had just come from his supper in the saloon to the lower deck.

"They hadn't better go down there, sir, if you'll excuse me for interfering;" said Dixon, one of the sailors.

"And why?" demanded Wharton.

"Because it'll blow like blazes afore midnight, sir, and the hold is only 'bout half full of freight, shifting 'bout

with the rollin' o' the boat, which'll mash the creeturs to death all of a sudden, 'fore they can get out. It's safe enough in fair weather, sir."

A blaze of lightning, followed by a crash of thunder, and the bustling noise overhead, stopped the conversation for a minute, and then Wharton said:

"What the devil am I to do with the vermin? I can't leave them there to be drenched with the rain. They might get their death of cold, and then I would be out thousands of dollars."

"You might speak to the cap'n, sir. Here's the steerage, with only two poor white men in it. We don't ever put niggers in there except when there's no white people to object; but these men might let 'em come in, seeing it's the only way to shelter 'em from the storm."

Another blaze of lightning and another peal of thunder silenced the speakers. When it had passed, Wharton said:

"I will go and speak to the captain."

He went and spoke to the captain, but the result was a significant one. The captain was as obliging as a man half distracted by hasty preparations to meet the storm could be expected to be; but the two white men who occupied the steerage flatly refused to allow the colored people to share it with them, although there were several bunks vacant.

The cabin was occupied by a Spanish lady and gentleman and their child and nurse. These, hearing all about the difficulty, begged that the girl belonging to the party might be brought into the cabin.

All this time the storm was rising in such violence that the people could not always hear each other speak; and the captain was getting ready for a very bad night.

Servia was brought into the cabin. No one took any notice of her, however. The whole of the kindness of the foreigners was expended in giving her shelter. Servia had courtesied on coming into the ladies' cabin, and then seated herself on the lowest step of the companion way, where she sat with her hands folded on her lap and her eyes fixed upon the floor. Her three companions found shelter at last in the cook's galley.

A terrific storm of thunder, lightning, wind and rain followed. No one went to bed. No one left the cabin for

long. The Spaniard walked uneasily up and down, and occasionally went out on deck to view the outside; but these visits were unwelcomed by the men on duty, and as the storm rose to higher fury, became impracticable, for the dense darkness of the night prevented him from seeing a foot before his face, while the fury of the winds and waves, and the rolling of the boat, drove him back, drenched by a douche from the spray.

Then the door of the companion way was closed and fastened to prevent the waves, that incessantly dashed over the decks, from rushing down and flooding the cabin.

The Spaniard paced the floor until the increased motion of the boat made it impossible for him to keep his feet, so he sat down beside his wife, who was diligently saying the litany of "Our Lady of the Sea." The awe-stricken nurse sat with the child in her arms, making, in a subdued voice, responses to her mistress' reading.

Servia watched the group with a sad interest, which chiefly concerned the child, who was not frightened at all, but continued to chatter, and seemed rather to enjoy the flashes of lightning and the rocking of the boat. Servia could not understand, or even remember, the words of her prattle, except two, which she could afterward recall from the frequency of their occurrence—these were *"Madre"* and *"Maisa."* She understood, too, that the father—as he lifted the little one in his arms, and by a sudden lurch of the boat was nearly thrown off his feet with his treasure before he could stagger to a seat near his wife—called her "Zenobia," with the sonorous intonation of his native tongue.

Even amid her woe, Servia was strangely impressed by the incongruity between the child and the full-toned, imperial name she bore. And from that circumstance remembered it.

The storm rose to its highest pitch and fury. The boat was driven off her course, and refused to longer obey her helm. All was confusion on deck; all was breathless silence in the cabin. Every thought and feeling of those shrinking in enforced inaction in the cabin was absorbed in awe at the stupendous battle of the elements; the roaring of the sea, the pealing of the thunder, the howling of

the wind, the tossing of the boat, the chaos of deafening noise and devastating strife in the pitchy darkness of that awful night was maddening to the toilers above; paralyzing to the watchers below.

Suddenly the end came. The boat seemed to be thrown skyward, and then dashed downward with a tremendous and stunning crash upon a reef of rocks that parted her amidships in an instant—in the twinkling of an eye—and crew, passengers and freight were in the black and boiling water.

There had not been a moment of warning in which to get out a lifeboat or to slip on a life-preserver. A scene of wildest and most horrible confusion ensued in that inky hell of waters, amid the leaping waves, tossing objects and struggling human life. A scene indescribable in its intensity of disaster and despair. Shrieks, cries, groans, prayers and curses mingled with the roaring of the sea and the howling of the wind. Sometimes a voice, sharpened by anguish, pierced high above the roar of wind and wave, calling upon some beloved one's name, "Where are you?" But all of these human sounds were soon drowned and stilled forever.

Servia, who had sinfully longed for the boat to be wrecked, that she might be rescued from "degradation," now, with the instinct of self-preservation, used her wonderful power as a vigorous swimmer and kept herself up as long as possible in the strife of the elements.

Suddenly, as she spread her fingers out weblike at arms' length under the water, her hand touched something floating. She could not see an inch through the black darkness, but she thought it was the child, and seized it instantly in the firm grasp of one hand and held its head above the water.

The next instant a blaze of lightning illumined the pandemonium of destruction, and she saw the face of the little Spanish girl.

A moment after that—or it may have been an hour—for Servia could never be certain, she fainted and lost consciousness, commending her soul to God with her last sentient thought, as the dying do, for she thought her last moment had come.

CHAPTER VI.

SERVIA AND HER CHARGE.

Tell why, oh, Nature,
Thou mad'st me what I am, with all the spirit,
Aspiring thoughts and elegant desires
That fill the happiest mind? Ah! rather, why
Did'st thou not form me sordid as my fate,
Base-minded, dull and fit to carry burdens?
Why have I sense to know the curse that's on me?
Is this just dealing, Nature?—OTWAY.

When Servia recovered consciousness, she found herself lying on a mattress on the deck of a schooner. A group of people were around her, doing all they could to restore her. Among them was Wharton, who, as soon as she opened her eyes, placed a glass of whisky to her lips, and told her to drink it. Servia obeyed mechanically.

"She's all right now—she'll do," said the man, as he took the glass from her hand and walked away.

She breathed more freely, but her mental faculties were slow in returning. She heard a child crying, and, turning her eyes in the direction of the sound, she saw the little girl whom she had rescued, held in the arms of a plainly clothed white woman, who stood in the group around her. The child was wailing bitterly, and calling for *"Madre"* and *"Maisa!"* And it was all the woman could do to pacify her. Otherwise, the little one seemed not to have suffered from her sudden plunge into the dark and stormy water. She was wrapped in dry clothes, and was nibbling a ship biscuit, while the tears fell down her face, and she only stopped nibbling to wail, and only stopped wailing to nibble.

The sight of the child did more than anything else to restore the faculties of Servia. The horror of the midnight shipwreck rushed to her memory, and she might have swooned again but for the stimulant she had just swallowed. She closed her eyes with a shudder. When she opened them again she saw that day was dawning, and that the storm was over. Indeed, she knew it was quite over when she first recovered her senses, only she had not

noticed the fact at the time. She saw that the group who had stood around her had dispersed, and only the woman with the fretting child remained.

"Do you think that you could get up and come down into the cabin? Because if you are able, I could lend you a suit of my clothes to wear till your'n is dry," said this woman.

"Thank you," feebly replied Servia, attempting to rise. She found that she was wrapped in a large blanket only, instead of any other clothing, and that she was still too weak to lift its weight; she sank back on the mattress.

"Ah, I see you can't get up just yet. Lie still. As soon as the coffee is made I will bring you a cup."

"Were all—all—the people saved from the wreck?" inquired Servia.

"As far as I know, there wasn't no one saved, 'cept it was what we picked up," answered the woman.

"And—and—who were they?"

"Why, you and your child, and the nigger buyer and a nigger they called Ben."

Servia sighed and closed her eyes. The woman walked away with the wailing child.

A little later in the morning, when the child had been put to sleep in a berth, and Servia had had a cup of strong coffee, a roll and an egg, and had been removed to the little cabin and clothed in a suit of the woman's clothing, she heard all of the particulars of the rescue from the lips of the latter.

The steamer *Errand Girl* had been driven clear off her course, and had been dashed to pieces on a rocky islet off Point Lookout. The four passengers known to be saved had been picked up by a small boat sent out from the schooner *Carrier Dove*, Miles Tawney, master. The woman who helped to nurse Servia and the little girl was the skipper's wife, Nancy Tawney by name. She was a little, thin, sallow, dark-haired creature, clothed in a calico gown and white neckerchief.

"They said as how you did seem quite gone when you was picked up, but the way your arm was clinched and stiffened round your little gal was a sight to behold! Well, it was nat'ral. Is she your onliest one?" inquired Mrs. Tawney.

"She is not my child at all. She is the daughter of a foreign lady and gentleman whom I met on the boat," Servia explained.

"You don't say so! Well, now! See what 'magination will do to a body! Well, now, that child is so dark, and seems so much like you, that I made sure she must be your'n! And her poor father and mother drownded! Well, that's sad!" mused the skipper's wife.

"I hope they were not drowned," said Servia.

"Well, they was, then, poor creeturs, 'less they was picked up by some other craft, which wasn't likely."

"Have you saved the little girl's clothes that she was found with?" inquired Servia.

"Of course I have. They was hung up to dry along o' your'n on deck."

"I am glad of that, for, if her father and mother and nurse are all lost, we may need to keep those clothes to identify her to any relations she may have in foreign parts."

"Sartinly. But what is to be done with the child till then?"

"Won't you keep her?" inquired Servia.

"Couldn't possibly. I'm on the schooner all the time, and ain't got no young uns of my own," answered the woman.

"Well, then, I'll ask Mr. Wharton to let me take care of her until we can put her in some orphan asylum, to stay until her friends are advertised for and found, which, of course, they will be," said Servia.

When the little girl awoke, Servia took her to her own bosom and succeeded in quieting her better than the skipper's wife had done.

Little Zenobia, as Servia remembered her imperial name, was a very beautiful child, with a strange, foreign, weird beauty peculiar to herself. Her complexion was very dark, yet clear, with a crimson flush on cheeks and lips. Her features were pure Grecian; the forehead low and smooth, the nose fine and straight, the lips arched and full, the chin round and pointed. Her large eyes and curly hair were as black as night. Those eyes were wondrously lovely—deep, tender, luminous and shaded with long,

thick, curved eyelashes, and arched by slender, nearly straight, eyebrows.

When put into her own clothes again, her suit seemed as foreign as herself. She wore a frock of camel's-hair cloth, embroidered around the edge of the skirt, around the belt and sleeves and top of the bodice, with the mignonette border so much in favor among the India workers in camel's-hair. Her little silk stockings and morocco boots were black, and both curiously embroidered—the first in floss, the second in silver and gold thread. She also wore a necklace set in topaz and pearls, linked with gold. And on this was hung a plain crucifix of curved bone. Her underclothing was of fine flannel, embroidered with silk, and fine linen trimmed with lace. They thought, from her dark complexion, black hair and eyes, that she must be Spanish, but from her strange appearance in other respects, Moorish or Algerian. No one could tell as yet.

It was natural that poor Servia should conceive a strong affection for the child she had saved from death. All the mother's heart awoke in the maiden's breast, and she loved this beautiful child as if she had first given it life, as well as afterward saved it. That night the desolate girl took the desolate child to her bosom in the lower berth that was assigned to her in the tiny cabin of the schooner. The captain's wife had the berth on the opposite side. No one else was in the cabin.

The voyage of the *Carrier Dove* up the Potomac was very slow. She had to battle against head winds and the current day and night.

Servia took the child up on deck every day, and sat in the stern in the shadow of the sail. Wharton paced the deck, but seldom spoke to her.

Once she saw Ben, who burst out crying at the sight of her, and said:

"Dey's bofe drownded, Miss Servy! Oh, wot'll poor Aunt Judy an' Aunt Lilly do w'en dey hears how their boys went?"

"The Lord will comfort two such good women, Ben. And I think, after a while, they will be less unhappy, knowing that their sons are at rest, than if they only knew

that they were in bondage at a distance, where they might never be heard of again," said Servia.

" 'Haps yo's right, Miss Servy," Ben admitted, with a sigh.

"Get along, you black villain! What are you loafing around here for?" demanded Wharton, coming up to the spot.

Ben hastened to obey.

The schooner was short-handed, and the weather was rough, so Ben had to lend a hand and work his passage.

Poor Servia seemed to love the little waif more and more as the time passed. The child still fretted at intervals for its father, mother or nurse. Servia did all that love could suggest to comfort her. She begged needles, and thread and pieces of cloth from the skipper's wife, and made a rag baby with which the little girl was delighted. She walked with her up and down the deck, or the little cabin floor, and sang her to sleep every night. Soon the child's heart responded to kindness, and she loved her new nurse almost as much as the nurse loved her. Servia dreaded the time that should separate her from her pet, who had come to be her treasure. She longed to ask Wharton the privilege of taking care of the little one until her friends should be heard from. But she feared to encounter his ruffianly manner, and put off her petition from day to day.

It was late in the afternoon of the sixth day when the schooner reached the wharf in Washington, at the foot of Sixth Street.

Wharton called his two colored people to come on. They obeyed. Servia came with the child in her arms, trembling with fear of an impending separation, yet dreading to utter her petition. But Wharton showed not the slightest sign of any wish or purpose to part the nurse and child. On the contrary, he drove his property before him across the gang plank, hailed a cart which was waiting for a job, ordered the colored folks to get into it, and, following them, told the driver to drive to the slave pen.

At that time the slave pen—called by the street boys "the Georgia pen"—was situated in that part of South Washington known as the island, and not far from the Smithsonian Institute. On the outside it presented noth-

ing but a high, board fence. On the inside, this fence was lined with rows of wooden sheds, in which the slaves were lodged. It was a place of detention for such colored people as were brought to the city to be sold at private sale, for I never heard of a slave auction being held in my native city.

The cart drove up Sixth Street, crossed Maryland Avenue to Seventh Street, and soon drew up to the gate of the pen. Here Wharton alighted and ordered his property to follow him. Ben jumped down and held out his arms to take the child. But poor Servia, afraid of losing her little girl if she should let her out of her arms for even a moment, shook her head, and, holding her treasure closely, descended from the cart and stood beside her fellow victim. By this time the gate was opened, and Wharton, after paying the cartman, drove the man and the woman, with the child, in before him.

The sun set just as they passed within the gate. Servia thought the coincidence significant. But still she held the child in her arms, and that was some comfort, for she thought perhaps it was not to be taken from her yet a while. The gates clanged to behind them, and the keeper came forward to meet them.

"How's trade?" asked Wharton, after the first curt greeting had passed between the two men.

"D—— dull!" exclaimed the keeper. "But I reckon you'll find a market for your young woman, easy enough!"

"Why, what do you mean?"

"There was an old gentleman here this morning—one Col. Pryor, of Virginia—who wants a likely young woman for a seamstress and housekeeper, but there was none here at that hour to suit him, and, of course, I wasn't expecting you. He is stopping at the Metropolitan, and I can send him a message, and I shouldn't wonder if he looked in here to-morrow, anyhow."

"I'll look him up to-night," said Wharton, who was in no humor to let a good customer or a good bargain slip through his hands.

"He said that he should be here for a few days longer," added the keeper.

"I must see him to-night. Mustn't let grass grow

under my feet. You heard of the awful misfortune that happened to me?" asked the negro buyer, thinking only of "me," and not of the many lives lost, and families left desolate, by the disaster to the *Errand Girl.*

"No! What?" demanded the keeper.

"Why, that rotten little tub, the *Errand Girl,* went down in a storm on Tuesday night, and I lost two of the strappingest nigger boys you ever set eyes on! Fifteen hundred dollars clean gone out of my pocket down into the sea! D—— it! I must make it up, somehow."

"I hadn't heard of the disaster. I reckon you've brought the first news of it. I don't think there have been any arrivals from down the river for a couple of days. Delayed by head winds, I reckon. How did you come?"

"By the *Carrier Dove.* Carrion Crow it ought to be! Nasty little tub!"

"She picked you up?" inquired the keeper, struck by the ingratitude of the rescued trader.

"Yes; but she didn't pick up my two valuable nigger boys, d—— her!"

"And was everyone else saved but the two boys?"

"No. Everyone was lost except the party you now see before you."

"All! Passengers, crew and all?" exclaimed the keeper.

"Every blasted bloke of them! and my two nigger boys!"

"How did it happen?"

"I can't stop to tell you now; I want to get my supper and see—what's his name?"

"Col. Pryor, at the Metropolitan."

"Ah! yes. Well, I dare say you'll see all about the wreck in to-morrow's papers. Some hint or suspicion of it must have got around, for I saw half a dozen of them reporters, with pencils and pads in their hands, coming aboard the *Dove* as I stepped ashore. Look well after my niggers. I'll see you again before I turn in." Saying this, the trader turned and left the pen.

"What's your name, boy?" inquired the keeper, of Ben.

"Benjamin F'anklin Godf'ey, marse," replied the young man, taking, out of love and pride, his master's name, as many negroes do.

"Well, Benjamin Franklin Godfrey, do you see that shed in the corner? There's your bed. You shall have some supper presently. And your name, my girl?" he next inquired of Servia, as he saw Ben stroll off, with his hands in his pockets, toward the shed.

"Servia, sir," she replied.

"Servia what?"

"Servia only. I have no other name, sir."

"H'm!" grunted the keeper. "Your husband's name, then?"

"I have no husband, sir."

"H'm!" exclaimed the keeper, more emphatically than before. "Well," he continued, "over there, beside the house, are the women's quarters. You can go there and take your choice of the vacant places. You shall have something to eat presently."

"If you please, sir, can I have some milk for the child?" pleaded Servia.

"I'll see," replied the man, glancing down at the little girl, who now stood on the ground by Servia's side, clinging to her hand and hiding her face in her skirts."

"Thank you, sir," said Servia, as she led the child away in the direction indicated by the keeper.

There was a row of sheds built against the outside wall that separated an old stone house and its garden from the slave pens. Two of the sheds were empty. The others—four in number—were occupied by women and children; some neatly dressed, some ragged, some even squalid.

The two unoccupied sheds were in the corner. Servia took the extreme corner, so as to have a vacancy between her and her dear child on one side, and a party of undesirable people on the other. The sides of this shed and roof were pine planks. There was no floor. The only furniture was a pallet, a stool and a gray blanket that might be let down from the roof for the sake of privacy, or propriety. But no sooner had Servia seated herself and lifted the child to her lap, than a little crowd of negro women and children gathered before her shed and began to interview her.

"Whar yo' come fr'm, chile?" "Who yo' 'longs to, honey?" "Oh, laws! aine dat dere little gal purty?" "Say, honey, dat chile's fader aine no po' w'ite trash!

No, 'deed! Dat chile's fader's real fus' qual'ty. Who is he, honey, anyways?" questioned one woman, the most unsavory of the crowd.

"I don't know," replied Servia.

"Awful Lord!" exclaimed the woman, in wonder and perplexity.

"She is not my child," said the girl.

"Not you' chile? Who den, honey? How come she 'long o' you?" persisted the questioner.

"She is one I saved from the wreck, a poor orphan, whose parents and nurse were drowned," answered Servia, solemnly.

A storm of interrogations followed. Servia answered them as well as she could. Sometimes she broke down and wept, for her nerves had been most severely tried. The poor negroes sympathized with her in all sincerity, and comforted her, or tried to do so, as well as they could.

Presently a diversion came in the shape of a supper. A man with a hand cart came around and distributed to the people mugs of tea and hunks of cornmeal bread and broiled salt herring, and milk for Servia's child.

Soon after the negro women and children dispersed to their quarters, and Servia let down her blanket curtain, undressed her baby and herself and went to bed.

Notwithstanding all they had gone through, the woman and child slept well. The September night was cool, and the open air was refreshing. It was really no hardship to sleep in the open air in such weather. In bad weather and in winter the people were taken into the house. They were awakened in the morning by the negro children, who, in their ignorant carelessness of present, past or future, were completely happy so long as the sun was shining and they had enough to eat.

Very soon after they had all had breakfast, which was served in the same manner as the supper had been, and while Servia sat under the shed with the little girl in her lap, the gate opened, and Wharton entered, accompanied by a strange gentleman.

CHAPTER VII.

NAT PRYOR, OF THE NOTCHES.

A merrier man,
Within the limit of becoming mirth,
I never spent an hour's talk withal.
His eye begets occasion for his wit;
For every object that the one doth catch,
The other turns to a mirth-moving jest.
—SHAKESPEARE.

Servia looked at the newcomers in doubt, fear and trembling; for here, with Wharton, she thought, must be Col. Pryor, the purchaser of whom the keeper had told the trader on the night before.

They stopped in the middle of the yard, and stood talking. Servia, like almost all women, was a good physiognomist. She thought there was nothing very alarming in the appearance of the stranger.

Nat Pryor, as his neighbors called him, was a well-built man of medium height, of about fifty years of age. He had good features, a fresh complexion, laughing blue eyes, white teeth, which he frequently showed in a broad smile, and white hair and beard. He wore a summer suit of light blue jeans and a broad-brimmed yellow straw hat. There was much more merriment and good fellowship than dignity in his manner, since he exchanged jests even with Wharton.

"Yes," he was saying, "I am here to find a likely young woman as a seamstress and lady's maid for a neighbor of mine."

"Not for yourself, then, colonel?" inquired Wharton, his hopes of a fancy price for the girl falling to zero.

"Oh, dear, no!" replied the visitor. "What should I want of a lady's maid, who have no wife or daughters at home? Oh, no! It is for Mrs. Horah, of old Horah Hall, that I am trying to find a suitable maid."

"Well, I think I have a young woman here who will suit the lady, if she should be willing to pay the price. Handsome young women like this bring a high price in the market, you know."

"I didn't! I know very little of the trade! Never sold a nigger in all my life. Never bought one before. But this is for her. Sparkling young widow that! Wearing the weeds yet for as grand a scamp as ever walked."

"And you would like to be the gardener to get rid of them weeds, eh, colonel?" chuckled the trader.

"Ha! ha! ha! Ho! ho! ho! Maybe I should. At any rate, she gives me full discretion to purchase a maid for her ladyship. So let us look at the girl."

"There is another thing. This young woman has a child."

"Oh!" exclaimed the colonel, and stopped short.

"But the child is at least three years old, and the father is dead."

"Well, if the mother and child are both healthy, and the girl bears a good character for truth and honesty, and —and all that; and is neat and skillful in her work, and all the rest of it, I don't think the child will be any objection in a plantation house," said the colonel, in a reflective tone.

"No, unless she objects to the price. I shall have to ask two hundred dollars for that child," said Wharton, without a change of countenance or a twinge of conscience.

Nat Pryor dug his cane into the ground, and with his eyes fixed on the operation, remained in thoughtful silence for a minute. Then lifting his head, he said:

"Well, let us see the pair of them."

Wharton nodded, and led the way to the shed occupied by Servia, who had not caught the drift of the conversation.

"This is the woman, Servia, sir," said Wharton, as they reached the shed.

Servia put the child off her lap, rose and courtesied.

"Fine-looking girl," said the colonel. Then, addressing her, he inquired: "Well, Servia, do you think you would like to go down into Virginia, and live with a widow lady as her waiting maid?"

"I am willing to go where the Lord wills, sir," replied the girl.

"H'm! Then I suppose there is no one left behind that you are grieving after, my girl?"

"No one, sir; my honored mistress died the day I was

brought from home," said Servia, as the tears filled her eyes.

"Oh, well, well," exclaimed the colonel, who hated tears. "We have all got to die, you know. It is not a bit of use to be fretting after what can't be helped, you know. You will be very happy and comfortable at Horah Hall. It is a fine place, and Mrs. Horah is as kind a mistress as ever lived."

"Yes, sir; no doubt. I never knew a lady who was not. But, sir—I beg your pardon—would the mistress let me keep this child until——"

"Oh, of course. Mrs. Horah would be the last lady on the face of the earth to separate you from the child," replied the colonel, interrupting her, and certainly misunderstanding her, as he gave a kindly glance at the child, who was now standing by and shyly hiding her face in the folds of her nurse's skirts.

"Thank you, sir," said Servia, with a courtesy.

"What is her name?" he next inquired.

Wharton pricked up his ears, for he had not yet heard the name of the freeborn child that he was about to sell as a slave to make up his losses in the drowned negro boys.

"Zenobia, sir," replied Servia.

"A proud name, but I can match it, and even rank it with some of my own. Ha! ha! ha! Wharton!" he continued, turning to the trader, "I have a Jupiter, a Juno and a Minerva on my place. They do like royal and classic names, do they not? Ha! ha! ha!"

"I reckon it's the masters and mistresses that put them up to it," said the trader.

"Well, Wharton, we will go and settle up this business. Good-by, my girl; I shall not be likely to see you again before I leave the city, but if we come to a satisfactory arrangement, my overseer will call for you early to-morrow morning. He is down here making some purchases for the farm, and he will take you home to your new mistress. Mind you be ready. He must start at sunrise."

"I will be ready, sir," said Servia.

The two men walked away together, and the girl resumed her seat, and lifted the child once more to her lap. She felt much relieved and comforted at the idea

that she was to have a widow for a mistress. The lady, she thought, would be just and gentle, perhaps religious; she would allow her to keep the little girl until she should be claimed by her relatives. In which case Servia would be willing, though grieved, to part with her pet, for there was nothing selfish in Servia's love for the child. She only wished to care for her and defend her from harm, and make her happy in her humble and simple way until something better in the form of wealthy and powerful relatives should turn up. But, all the same, she knew it would be a great sorrow to part with the lovely little girl, even to rich relations, though not so heartbreaking as to see her sent to the untender mercies of an almshouse, or an orphan asylum.

During that last day Servia spent in the slave pen she begged from the keeper writing materials and a stamp to write to her old master, Mr. Godfrey, to tell him of the wreck of the *Errand Girl*, and the fate of her fellow servants, that he might break it to their mothers on the farm. One page of her letter she devoted to a message from Ben to his old mother; a message full of love, faith and courage. This letter the keeper promised to post for her. And he kept his word.

At sunrise the next morning a large canvas-covered farm wagon, drawn by two great, strong mules, stood before the entrance of the pen. On the driver's box sat Tom Beeves, the overseer of Col. Pryor's plantation. He was a stout, burly, cheery-looking Englishman, with sandy hair and whiskers, sunburned face and gray eyes. He might have been about forty years of age, and was quite as well dressed as his employer, in a clean, brown tweed suit and a new felt hat. Beside him on the box sat an old negro man.

"Hello!" called Beeves; "hello, there!"

A negro boy opened the gate.

"Is the gal ready?" inquired Beeves. "I am starting."

"Dey aine none o' 'em had eny breakfas', yet," replied the boy.

" 'Urry up, then! I can't wait," exclaimed Beeves.

In a few moments Servia appeared, clothed in a rusty black alpaca that she had worn since she left Godfrey's farm, and with a handkerchief tied over her head, for her

bonnet had been lost in the wreck. In her arms she carried the child, who was clothed in its Oriental suit, but was also without bonnet or hat.

"Climb up, my gal! 'Ere, give me the kid, till you get your seat," said Beeves.

Servia obeyed.

The wagon was furnished with one good back seat inside, but all the rest of the floor was covered with packages of merchandise, probably the provisions, dry goods and groceries for the plantation's winter consumption. As soon as Servia had seated herself, Beeves turned and placed the child on her lap, saying pleasantly:

"As pretty a kid as hever I see in hall my life."

"Thank you, sir," replied the young woman, as she received the child.

"Come, Tim, start the beasts. We've got a good three days' journey afore us 'twixt this and Mistyrock, and we must try to reach Drainsville by ten o'clock, so as to give the creeturs a couple o' hours rest afore we go on," said the overseer.

The negro driver obeyed, and started the mules at a good pace for the Long Bridge across the Potomac.

The child seemed pleased, as children almost always are, with the motion of the wagon. She looked up into her nurse's face with her pathetic, questioning eyes, and, smiling, said:

"Madre? Maisa?"

"Oh, she has not forgotten them yet. And it is seven days since they were lost!" sighed Servia to herself, and then answered the child as well as she could: "Yes, darling, we are going to *Madre* and *Maisa*, I hope—when we go to heaven."

Then the little one began to be very full of glee at the ride over the bridge which they were crossing, and at the prospect of being taken straight to *Madre* and *Maisa*.

After having crossed the Potomac, a four hours' journey through the farms and forests of Fairfax County brought them, at about ten o'clock, to the green and pleasant little, old-fashioned hamlet of Drainsville, situated in a verdant basin among the hills of Virginia. In the old stagecoaching days there was a delightful inn there which was also the first posthouse on the Alexandria

and Leesburg turnpike. Here Beeves put up his mules for food and rest, and at the old-fashioned hour of noon the party dined.

Beeves gave Servia just as good a dinner as he had for himself, although the "customs of the country" obliged her to eat in the kitchen, in company with the wagon driver and the servants of other travelers. Servia did not in the least mind this. She had been taught by her, whom she had already begun to call her "sainted mistress," that it could not be her company, whatever they might be, but her own behavior that could raise or lower her.

At one o'clock, when the mules had had nearly three hours' rest, they resumed their journey.

That night they slept at Snickerville, and the next morning at daybreak they took the road again. The second night they rested at Rising, a small hamlet on the slopes of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

Late in the evening of the third day they reached the mountain hamlet of Mistyrock, where they had to spend the night, for neither mules nor people could go any further.

CHAPTER VIII.

A MOUNTAIN HAMLET.

Face to face with the true mountains,
  Standing silently and still,
Drawing strength, 'gainst fancy's dauntings,
  From the air about the hill,
And from Nature's open mercies,
  And most debonair good will.—E. B. Browning.

Mistyrock was at that time, perhaps, the highest inhabited spot on the whole Alleghany range. It might, probably, never have had an existence, had not the necessities of the mail route required a posthouse just at that point, where the stagecoaches could stop to change their horses, and refresh their passengers.

So, first a tavern, with a blacksmith shop, was built by the roadside, surrounded by large stables. Soon followed a country store, in which all the necessaries of life were

for sale, including groceries, dry goods, agricultural implements and kitchen utensils; though but a small stock was kept in each department. Next in order came a druggist, who also claimed to be a doctor of medicine. Following him arrived a lawyer, who soon became a justice of the peace of the county. Last of all, a church and a parsonage was built, and a minister installed, whose wife opened a small boarding school for girls, for the convenience of the neighborhood and the increase of the family revenue. This was the ante-revolutionary history of the place.

Since that time the hamlet had not changed in any way except to deteriorate. Since the railroad had built a branch line in the same direction on a lower grade, and diverted the traffic from the old turnpike, it had been abandoned to local uses; and the old stagecoach, with its four horses, its crowd of travelers, and its resounding horn, had become a mere tradition of the past. The descendants of the hamlet, however, still held their ground in the old place. They came originally from the surrounding neighborhood, but they clung to the spot, though now it hardly afforded them a living. The buildings endured the ravages of time very well, for they were not only founded on a rock, but built of hewn rocks from the mountains near by. The old tavern, however, had changed its name. In colonial days it was called the "King George," but now it was "George Washington."

The hour was so late, and the night so dark, when Beeves and his party arrived at Mistyrock, that Servia could see nothing before her but the flashing lights held by the negro hostlers, dimly revealing what seemed to be a deep road cut through a mountain ravine, built up on each side with irregular, detached, stone houses; with high, rocky, scantily wooded precipices behind them. The largest building was that before which the wagon halted. Every other house in the hamlet was dark except this, and this was only faintly lighted by a red lamp in the barroom window, and the flaring pine knots carried by the men who came out to attend to the travelers.

"Say, Marse Tom!" exclaimed one of these. "Dere hab ben a man yere f'om Horah 'waitin' fo' yer all de arternoon!"

"Oh! there 'as! Where is he?" inquired Beeves.

"Fas' 'sleep up'n stable loft," replied the negro, grinning.

"Well, we won't disturb him to-night. Hand me the child, my girl, and get down," said Beeves, as he alighted and held out his arms for the little girl.

Servia obeyed.

"It's very late, but I 'ope you can give us some supper, my man," said Beeves.

"Oh, yes, marse! Yectly Uncle Si tell Marse Billy as how yer was 'spected dis ebenin', Marse Billy he tell Aunt Kitty to keep de fire up in de kitchen, case yer'd want some supper."

"Very well! Look after these mules, and give the driver and the hother nigger something to eat," directed the overseer.

"Yes, marse; an' where mus' I——" The old man did not finish the sentence, but turned his eyes on Servia, who stood holding the sleeping child in her arms.

"Oh, yes! To be sure! Well, I 'ardly know. Take her to the cook to get her supper, and ask the cook to show her where she can sleep."

"All right, marse. Come along o' me, honey; my name is Uncle Bob. Gimme de yittle gal to carry fo' yer; yer mus' be wo'ful tired," said the old negro, kindly.

"Thank you, but I am not," replied Servia, holding on to her child, and following her guide where he led her around the end of the house to the rear.

The hostlers and stablemen gathered around the wagon, and began to unharness the mules.

Beeves walked into the bar, where he found the barkeeper dozing in an armchair, but waking up quickly at the sight of a customer. The Englishman wanted only a mug of beer and a pipe while waiting for his supper.

Meanwhile, Uncle Bob, as he called himself, conducted his charges to the kitchen, where an aged negro woman, in a dark gown, with a red kerchief tied over her head and under her chin, sat smoking a pipe in the chimney corner. A big black cat was coiled up on her lap. On the hearth, before the fire, sat a singing teakettle. The aged woman took the pipe from her lips, laid it on the

jams, shook the cat off her lap, and rose to meet the newcomers.

"Yere dey is, Aun' Kitty! Miss—— I dunno yer name, honey." And old Bob thus addressed the girl, after stopping in his introduction.

"Servia," replied the latter.

"All right! Dis is Miss Serv-yer, Aun' Kitty; an' Miss Serv-yer, dis is Aun' Kitty Easby. Yer alyeady knows Uncle Tim P'yor, so I doane hab no call for to induce him."

"Set down, chillun," grunted the old woman, not uncivilly, but wearily, as she pushed a chair with her foot toward Servia, while she let Tim find one for himself.

"Now, wot dat w'ite man up dere wan' fo' his supper?" inquired Aunt Kitty, in a discontented tone.

"Well, if yer 'ludes to Marse Tom Beeves, yer needn't cook nothin' fo' him," broke in Tim. "Kech a Inglisher eatin' anyfing hot on a warm night. No, 'deed! I hearn him gib de order. Bread an' beef an' beer, an' a-plenty of it. He'll make way wid it, you kin trus' to dat."

"Well, den, wot'll you an' de youn' gal hab yo'se'f, Tim? Bacon an' egg is handy-like," suggested the cook.

"Now, jis anyfing yer please, Aunt Kitty! Us doane wan' ter put yer to no chubble."

The old woman then made some tea, and placed bread and butter and cold ham on the table, from which the old man and young woman made a meal. The tired child slept through the whole proceeding.

"Woane dat chile wan' somethin' to eat?" inquired the cook.

"She may when she wakes. If you would let me have a mug of milk, I should be obliged," replied Servia. This was supplied.

Then the two men went off to the stable loft, where they were to sleep, after bidding the women good-night.

"Now, honey, if you's wore out, as I is, yo'll like to go to bed, I yeckon," sighed the old woman.

"Indeed, I will," assented Servia.

Aunt Kitty covered up the fire, took up the tallow candle, and, calling the girl to follow her, led the way up a ladder, through a trapdoor, into a loft over the kitchen.

It was a bare place, whose only furniture consisted of two beds.

"Dere, honey, you take dat one by de win'ow," said Aunt Kitty.

Servia set the mug of milk on the window sill, and then seated herself on a pine box—for there was neither chair nor stool in the place—and with the child in her lap began to undress her. The little girl did not wake during the whole process. Soon after both women and the child were abed and fast asleep.

Servia and the little girl slept the deep and dreamless sleep of extreme fatigue. She was awakened in the morning by the sun shining through a small, uncurtained window in the gable end of the loft, straight into her face. She opened her eyes, and looked about as memory slowly returned. The old woman was gone and her bed was made up. On the pine box stood a stone pitcher, a tin basin and a coarse towel.

Servia rose in haste, washed and dressed herself, but let the child sleep on while she offered up her morning prayers. By the time she had finished the little one was also awake, and fretting for something to eat. Servia gave her the cool milk, which happily had not soured, then dressed her and took her down to the kitchen, where they found Aunt Kitty and a little old black man, whom the former introduced as "Mr. Si'as, f'om Horah, wot was cum for to fe'ch Miss Serv-yer home."

The old man bowed, scraped and smiled, and held out his hand, saying:

"I'se moughty p'oud to make your 'quaintance, Miss Serv-yer."

"Thank you," said the girl, gently, giving her hand.

"Lor'! wot a purty yittle gal dat a' yourn is, Miss Serv-yer!" he said, looking with genuine admiration at the beautiful little exotic.

"Yes," said the maiden foster mother, not feeling inclined to enter into explanations, and, besides, beginning to feel and enjoy a proud proprietorship in the lovely little one whom nobody seemed to claim.

"Oh! doane talk 'bout yo' white chillun! Oh, I tell yer! I nebber see sich a beauty in all de days ob my life! Nebber! An' she's de immuge ob yerse'f, Miss Serv-yer!"

Through all her sadness the girl smiled at this wild fancy, or gross flattery; and, to change the subject, she inquired:

"When shall we set out for Horah Hall?"

"Whenebber Marse Beebes is ready. De madam—dat's my mist'ess ober yonder at Hoyah—guv me a letter fo' him an' sent me over yere wiv it yist'rday arternoon in case he cum, but she tole me for to stay till he did cum. An' I cum in de yittle cart for to fe'ch yer an' yer trunk."

While they were talking the old cook was busy putting their breakfast on the table, and now she called them to sit down, saying:

"Yer better make haste; Marser Beebes is yeatin' his'n in de dinin' room, an' Uncle Tim Pryor is harnessin' up de mules, so I yeckon yer's gwine to start right away."

Servia and Si sat down to the table—Servia with the child on her lap. Here they were soon joined by the wagoner, who came in and drew a chair to the board, and seated himself, nodded and smiled "Good-morning" to Servia, and then said:

"Marse Beebes is jis' settlin' de bill in de bar, an' eberyfing is ready fo' to start, so I wishes ob yo' to make has'e if yer want to eat yo' breakfas'." And with this he set them a good example by attacking his food and devouring it as for a wager. But they were not hurried. Tom Beeves was a good-natured animal. Indeed, Col. Pryor would never have set an ill-conditioned man over his people. So, with a good appetite and a good digestion, he sympathized with all hungry creatures, both man and beast, and gave his wagoner as well as his mules plenty of time for their breakfast. Half an hour afterward, however, they were called out.

"'Low me! do 'low me, Miss Serv-yer!" pleaded sentimental Uncle Si, holding out his arms to relieve the girl of the weight of the child. But the sprite, with a long stare and a howl of disgust and abhorrence, turned and buried her face in her nurse's bosom, and clung with her arms around her neck.

"Hey! aine she got a temper ob her own! Whip yo' horses!" exclaimed old Si, laughing as they all walked to where the wagon, drawn by the mules, and the little one-horse cart stood waiting for them. Beeves had not

yet come out. He was talking agriculture with some of the neighboring farmers in the barroom, so that Servia had an opportunity to look around her.

The hamlet, as she had supposed from her obscure night view, consisted of one street only, and this looked what it really was, a country road laid out in a deep ravine, between two high, thinly wooded ridges. It was built up on each side with detached stone houses of different sizes, with little gardens around them. Servia cast her glance around. The view was grand, with its rolling hills and vales, and its waving forests, and its golden fields, all dotted here and there with farms and farm buildings. Having come from a lovely, smiling, gently undulating landscape of her native State, and having reached this mountain top by several hours' journey through the darkness of the night, Servia felt this high and broad expanse of vision as a revelation. The poetic temperament is not peculiar to any race or station. This humble daughter of sorrow possessed it to an intense degree. She almost forgot her State—forgot herself—in looking abroad, and, as it were, realizing that she stood upon a heavenly body rolling with inconceivable swiftness through the immensity of space, yet restricted to its own orbit around the sun.

She was awakened from her reverie by the voice of Beeves, saying:

"Come, my good girl, get in! We must be off!"

He took the child from her without a word—the little one had become used to the overseer, and never objected to go to him—then he helped Servia to a seat, gave her the little girl, and finally got into the cart, and seating himself beside her, took the reins, saying to Si: "I will drive this trap. You get into the wagon along with Tim."

"The imperence ob dese po' white trash!" grumbled Si to himself, as he mounted a seat beside Tim, but he gave his dissatisfaction no articulate utterance.

They set out, the little cart leading the way. The village street merged into the road that wound between the steep, wooded precipices, down the mountain side. They soon left the village behind them.

About four hours of this slow, winding journey, brought them to the first farmhouse they had seen since

they left Mistyrock. This was a large, rude building of stone, surrounded by a high stone wall, and shaded by many trees. It was situated between two high, wooded ridges, and was called "The Notches."

"Here we are!"' exclaimed Beeves, drawing up before the great double, oaken gate.

"Now, Si, you get out and come along 'ere with us. Tim, you drive that wagon straight to the barn. Take out the mules and make Haleck attend to them. But don't leave the wagon, or let hanyone come near it, until I get back. Mind. I have got a list of the bundles and parcels, so don't let hany of them be missing."

"Hi! who yer finks a fool, Marse Beeves? Ketch me losin' any Marse Nat's fings," said Tim.

"Come along, girl! Now for 'Orah 'All. There our long journey will be ended," said Beeves, touching up the horse, who started at a good speed, as if he knew he was going home to his stable and supper.

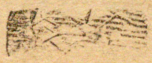
CHAPTER IX.

SERVIA'S NEW SERVICE.

She must endure, yet loving all the while,
  Apart, yet never separate from her kind;
Meet every frailty with the gentlest smile,
  Though to no possible depth of evil blind.
This is the riddle she has life to solve,
  But in the task she shall not work alone;
For while the worlds around the sun revolve,
  God's heart and mind are ever with his own.

—MONCKTON MILNES.

Winding down the mountain side, through a thicket of stunted pines and cedars that grew closer as they approached the bottom, they came in sight of old Horah Hall, standing in the center of its circular vale, surrounded by its grove of oak and elm trees. Here they entered the farm road winding between old fields and orchard, vineyard and garden, until they reached the gate opening into the avenue leading through the grove to the house.



Even on this glowing September afternoon, the effect of the scene, so deeply shaded, so silent and so solitary, was very depressing. Uncle Si drew the cart up to the heavy, old oak portico, jumped off his seat, ran up the moss-grown steps, and, on the rusty lion's head which did duty as a knocker, sounded an alarm that speedily brought Brush to the door.

"De madam 'spected you las' night," was the first greeting of the new apparition.

"We didn't get to Mistyrock huntil near midnight," Beeves explained, as he got off the seat and took the child from Servia's arms, to enable her to alight.

"Where's your mistress?" he next inquired, as he gave the little girl back to her nurse.

"De madam's in de panel parlor w'ere she allers is in de daytime," said Brush, as he conducted the party into the hall.

"Well, go to her with my respects, and say that I 'ave brought the girl and child," remarked Beeves, dropping down on one of the oak chairs and wiping his perspiring forehead.

Brush went off on his errand, and, after an absence of a few minutes, came back and said:

"De madam say as how yer'll come in an' 'port to her."

"Then you sit here, my girl, huntil you are sent for," said Beeves to Servia, as he turned and followed Brush to the presence of the lady.

Servia seated herself on the oaken settee, with the child on her lap. Brush stood before her with an admiring expression on his black, good-natured face.

"Have a apple, miss?" he ventured to ask, at length, drawing a bright red one from his pocket, and holding it out to her.

"No, I thank you," replied Servia, throwing as much courtesy in her declination as possible. But the child threw out her little brown hand eagerly, exclaiming:

"Dadme! Dadme!"

"Wot do she mean by dawd ma?" inquired Brush.

"Dadme! Dadme! Manzana!" cried the child, before anyone could speak again.

"Wot do she mean?" hopelessly demanded the negro.

"I don't know! But you see she wants the apple," replied Servia.

"Will I gib it to her, den?"

"Yes, if you please. Thank you."

"Here, den, honey! Yer Uncle B'ush got apple for yer. Take it, honey," said Brush, holding out the fruit. But now the child turned away her head, and hid her face in the bosom of her nurse.

"Hik! hik! hik!" laughed the negro, good-humoredly. "She won't hab nuffin' 'tall to do 'long o' me! Here, yo' take it, Miss—Miss——"

"Servia is my name. Thank you," said the girl, as she received the fruit, and put it into the little fist of the child, who now turned and smiled sweetly on Brush, as if to atone for her former rudeness, bobbed her head several times and said:

"*Gracias, gracias, gracias!*"

"An' now what do she mean?" inquired Brush, grinning.

"I don't know, but I think she is trying to thank you."

"Well, ob all the outlandish chillun ebber I see, dis do beat all!" exclaimed Brush.

Before another word could be uttered Beeves returned, and said:

"Now, my man, show that girl in to her mistress. I must be off! Good-by, my girl! I think you will 'ave a 'appy 'ome 'ere. Good-by, baby!"

Servia rose and courtesied, and stood until the overseer had left the hall. Then she turned to follow Brush, who was waiting to show her in to her new mistress. He led her to the rear of the hall, where a door on the right-hand side stood partly open.

"Mist'ess, ma'am, here's de new maid," he said, putting his head in at the open door.

"Let her come in, then," said a low, sweet voice from the room.

"Yo' go in there, Miss Serv-yer," Brush whispered, and turned and left the spot.

Servia put the child down out of her arms, and, leading her by the hand, entered the room. The place was so dimly lighted that at first she could not see where to direct her steps.

"Come here," said the voice that had spoken before, and at the same time a hand drew up a window shade, and Servia saw that her mistress stood in a large, dark, oak-paneled parlor, very plainly furnished, with black mahogany tables, and deep red window curtains. There was no carpet on the polished floor, but old, dingy Turkish rugs, that lay before the two sofas and on the hearth. All this Servia saw at a glance. She also saw, seated at a small, round table near the window, the prettiest, saddest little woman, clothed in deep mourning, and wearing a widow's cap, that she had ever seen in her life. Leading the little girl, Servia crossed the room, courtesied and stood respectfully before her new mistress.

The lady dropped the stocking that she had been knitting, took up a folded paper that was lying beside her on the table, opened it, glanced down the page, and then looked up at the waiting girl, and said, doubtfully:

"Your name is—Sarah——"

"Servia, madam," she replied.

The lady looked more attentively at the paper before her, and said:

"Ah! so it is. A strange name. How old are you, Servia? Your age is set down here as seventeen. Is that right?"

"Yes, madam."

"You are very young to be the mother of that child, who must be, at least, three years old," said the lady, looking curiously at the beautiful little foreign birdling.

"Madam!" gasped the girl, under her breath, so surprised and shocked was she at the lady's words.

The lady, gazing at the wild-looking little creature, did not hear the low exclamation, but inquired:

"Where is your husband? I hope he is not so far off as not to be able to come to see you sometimes. Indeed, I might be able to effect his purchase, so as not to keep you apart," she added, speaking in a very kind tone.

"I have no husband, madam," replied Servia, in a sorrowful tone, for she was deeply, though vaguely, troubled by the lady's words. What did they mean? Wharton certainly knew that the little one was not her child, but the daughter of those two foreigners who had been lost in the wreck of the *Grand Girl*. But had he committed the

iniquity of representing that freeborn child as the daughter of a slave, and so sold her into slavery?

While she was so sadly reflecting, Mrs. Horah was regarding her with compassionate eyes.

"Poor girl!" she said. "You have lost him, then! Ah, I pity you! I know how to pity you. Life is full of trials, Servia."

"But I beg your pardon, madam; I have never been married," the girl explained, in the same troubled tone.

"Never been married!" exclaimed the lady, flushing, frowning and gazing down upon the little girl, who had stood looking up to this fair lady with innocent, fearless, wondering eyes; but who now, seeing her changed expression, turned and hid her face in her nurse's gown.

"Zenobia is not my child, madam," said Servia, in a sad, solemn, reproachful tone.

"Who—what—— Explain yourself, girl!" said the somewhat angry and bewildered lady.

"This dear little girl, whom I love more than I love myself," said Servia, feeling that she must speak affectionately of the child she was compelled to disown, "this darling is not mine, madam! I never saw her face until about ten days ago. Oh, please believe me, madam."

CHAPTER X.

SERVIA'S VICTORY.

"Stop!" commanded Mrs. Horah, taking up that document again and referring to it. "I certainly thought I purchased you both, through Col. Pryor, as mother and child."

"If you did, madam, it was a great crime!" said Servia, very much agitated.

The lady glanced up quickly, angrily, inquiringly

"Not on your part, madam, of course. No; nor on the part of that kind-hearted gentleman who acted for you," Servia hastened to say.

"Ah! I thought so. Here it is. Here, in this bill of sale, you are described as the mulatto girl Servia, aged seven-

teen years, and her female child, aged three years. Now, if she is not yours, whose is she, and how came she in your charge?"

"I do not know, madam, whose she is. I do not know the name of her parents, though I was with them on the boat. But I saved the child from drowning about ten days ago."

The lady looked at the girl keenly, doubtfully, disapprovingly.

"If she is not yours, how does it happen that she was sold with you?" she inquired, with an incredulous air.

Poor Servia, wrought up to almost hysterical passion at the cruel injustice done to the child whom she had saved, and whom she loved as if it had, indeed, been her own, suddenly dropped on her knees before her mistress, and sobbed forth:

"Oh, madam, it was the doings of that wicked trader, who sold her with me to Col. Pryor, for you! He knew, that trader did, that she was the daughter of the foreign lady and gentleman who were on the boat with us!"

"This is a very incredible tale you are telling me," said the lady, coldly, for she was haunted with the suspicion that the girl was trying to trick or cheat her out of her rights, and secure the freedom of her child.

Then Servia suddenly threw her arms above her head, brought her hands together with a convulsive clasp, and cried:

"Oh, madam, the little Zenobia is a free white child. If it is not the truth, if I am telling a lie, may the Lord of Truth strike the lying tongue dumb forever."

Mrs. Horah was impressed at last by the passion, earnestness and solemnity of the girl's appeal.

"This is amazing, incomprehensible, perplexing! And see how you have frightened the child! Now draw that hassock here and sit down and tell me all about this matter in an intelligible manner, if you can," said the lady.

"Heaven knows, madam, that there is nothing I wish more to do," replied Servia, earnestly. She drew the hassock to her mistress' feet, seated herself upon it, lifted the little girl upon her lap, kissed and soothed her, and then said: "I am at your orders, madam."

"Begin then," said the lady; "and mind," she added, se-

verely, for she was still suspicious, "I am not easily deceived."

"Not often by others, madam, but sometimes, possibly, by yourself."

"Girl, who brought you up?" exclaimed the lady, divided between the surprise she had felt during the whole interview at Servia's superior manner, and the displeasure she now felt at her presuming words.

"My dear, sainted mistress, madam."

"Sainted? She is dead, then?"

"She is in heaven, madam."

"She must have made a great favorite of you, even a constant companion."

"She was mother, father, teacher, friend—everything to me, for I was an orphan from my birth."

"Her death accounts for your being here, and I have a treasure in you, I am sure. Only you are a little too free of speech on occasion, and that must be reformed. Now, go on with your story."

Thus urged, Servia gave a truthful narrative of all that had happened to herself since she came into the possession of the trader, and to the child since she saved her from the wreck.

Mrs. Horah did not quite believe the story, but resolved to investigate its claim to truth.

She sat in silence for some moments, with her elbow leaning on the table and her head bowed upon her hand; then she asked:

"Why did you let this monstrous wrong be done to the child? Why did you not appeal to Col. Pryor, who never would have been a party to the least injustice to any human being, least of all to a helpless child?"

"I never had the slightest suspicion of what the trader was going to do, madam. I never knew till this hour what he had done."

"When the child was brought away with you had you no suspicions?"

"No, madam."

"That is strange. How was it?" inquired the lady, her doubts returning.

"You see, dear madam, I was afraid of her being sent to the almshouse, where she might not be treated well, so

when Col. Pryor was about to buy me for you he looked so kind that I was encouraged to ask him to please let me keep the child. And he said so kindly, of course I should, that I blessed him in my heart. I did not suspect that he had been told the child was my own. And I never saw him again."

"If the circumstances are such as you represent them, Servia, I see how that wicked fraud could have been perpetrated by an unscrupulous trader, for the child's complexion is almost as dark as your own."

"She is a foreigner, you know, madam."

"No; I don't know. This is a very extraordinary tale you have told me, and requires proof."

"Are there not means by which a lady of your position and advantages might easily prove or disprove this story?" modestly inquired Servia.

"Let me think," said Mrs. Horah. She was silent for a moment, and then inquired: "Have you any clothing she wore when she was rescued, as you say?"

"Yes, madam; she wears them now. You observe they are of foreign material and make."

"Yes, they certainly are," said the lady; "but they might have been given to the girl by some one," she added, mentally, as she touched a bell.

A housemaid answered the summons.

"Delphine," said Mrs. Horah, "this is my new seamstress, Servia. Take her to the kitchen to get her dinner, and then show her where she is to sleep, in the little room at the back of the upper hall."

The two girls nodded to each other.

"You would like to have the afternoon to unpack your trunk, and get rested, I suppose," the lady added, turning to the new servant.

"I have no trunk to unpack, madam. All our clothes were lost on the wrecked steamer. I and the child have no more than these we stand in," replied Servia.

"Oh, then, in that case I must go to Mistyrock to-morrow and get dry goods to fit you out. You will have plenty of sewing to do for yourself and the child, too, before you can begin anything for me," remarked the lady.

"You are very good, madam," said Servia, as she took

the hand of the little girl and turned to follow the maid from the room.

"You may leave the child with me. Come here, little one," said Isabel Horah, in her softest tones, and with her sweetest smile, holding out her hand to the little stranger.

The child hesitated an instant, but, as Servia let go her hand, and she met the kind gaze of the fair lady's eyes, she suddenly, with a little laugh, ran into her arms.

"I will make her acquaintance while you are getting your dinner; afterward, you can come for her," said the lady, as she lifted the little one to her lap.

Servia courtesied and followed her conductor.

The child watched her nurse until the door closed behind her, and then she turned and gazed up into the fair, sweet face of her new friend, with fearless, affectionate, admiring eyes. The lady looked down upon the little girl, studying her wistfully. She seemed a very sunbeam of light and beauty in the dusky room. If she were but three years old, as they thought, she was large for her age; plump and perfectly formed, with beautiful neck and arms, and an angelic face and head. Her complexion was certainly very dark, but her features were of a pure, though miniature, Grecian type, with a fine, straight nose; short upper lip, little Cupid's bow of a mouth, and round, pointed chin; large, luminous, black eyes that seemed to stream with light from within, under their thick fringe of eyelashes, and slender, slightly arched, black eyebrows; and with a low, broad forehead, shaded by a row of fine, soft, glossy, black curls.

"She is certainly the most beautiful child I ever saw in my life," mused the lady. "Though she might easily be taken for a quadroon—for her complexion, including eyes, hair and skin, is certainly as dark as any quadroon I ever saw. But the facial angle is really classic. Well, it is a mystery that I must try to solve!" she mentally concluded.

Little Zenobia, either tired of the silent scrutiny, or disturbed at the gravity that had replaced the smile on the lady's face, looked up pleadingly, and inquired:

"*Madre? Madre?*"

"Why, she is Spanish!" exclaimed Mrs. Horah, in her astonishment at hearing Servia's story so far confirmed.

Then, to try the little one further, she spoke to her in that tongue, and asked her what she had in her hand.

"*Una manzana,*" replied Zenobia, holding out her apple.

"Who gave it to you?"

"*El hombre,*" said the child, pointing toward the hall, Then again she looked up into the lady's face and pleaded, pitifully, "*Madre? Madre?*"

"Yes, darling. Yes, precious! You shall go to her by and by," said Isabel Horah, tears of pity for the desolate babe so cruelly dealt with filling her eyes, and soothing her conscience by the reflection that she had told no wicked falsehood, for, if all she had been taught was true, the babe would certainly go, sometime, to her mother in heaven. Then, raising the little one in her arms, she went to a set of hanging bookshelves and took from them a book of colored pictures illustrating a volume of natural history of birds. With this she sat down at the table and began to turn over the leaves, for the diversion of the little girl, who soon began to laugh and prattle over the gorgeous pictures.

Coming upon a highly colored plate of a parrot, she cried out with delight:

"*El loro! Mi loro!*"

"Oh, then you had a poll parrot?" said Mrs. Horah. She began to question the infant as they turned the leaves of the book. But as Isabel's knowledge of Spanish was limited, and the child's vocabulary consisted of a very few words, they did not make much progress in their intercourse. By the time they had finished the book, Servia reappeared.

"I fully believe your story now, my poor girl. I am sorry I ever doubted it. You deserve the greatest credit for the rescue of this child," said the lady, holding out her hand to the young woman.

"Oh, madam, you—you believe she is white, and ought to be free! Then I thank God!" said Servia, kissing the extended hand of her mistress, never once thinking of herself in the matter.

"Yes, she is Spanish, and evidently comes of a good family. So much I have ascertained from her prattle."

"And I never could understand one word she said, ex-

cept the name of her nurse, and that only because I heard the woman called by it on the boat," said Servia.

"I will spare neither trouble nor expense in finding, or trying to find, her friends or relatives. I know Col. Pryor will help me with his counsel. And if no one comes forward to claim her, I may, possibly, adopt the little one, and bring her up as my own daughter, as I have none. Meanwhile, Servia, be to her what you have been since you saved her life. Take her now, and give her some warm milk and put her to bed. To-morrow I will make comfortable arrangements for her, and for you also."

Servia made her usual obeisance, and took the hand of Zenobia to lead her away, but the tiny lady turned to her new friend and kissed her little hand, and bowed her curly black head with infantile grace, as she said:

"*Adios, mi señoro.*"

"*Buenas tardes, mi nina,*" returned Mrs. Horah, with a smile.

At this moment a rushing noise was heard, the door was flung violently open, and a boy burst into the middle of the room like a bombshell, with his eyes and cheeks aflame, as he exploded, in these words:

"Mother, I won't stand Meeke any longer! He's got to leave!"

Little Zenobia, in terror, buried her face in the gown of her nurse, who hurried her from the room.

CHAPTER XI.

MURDOK, THE HEIR.

Now, by the Holy Rood, thou knowest it well!
Thou cam'st on earth to make the earth a hell.
A grievous burden was thy birth to me;
Touchy and wayward was thy infancy;
Thy schooldays frightful, desperate, wild and furious.

—SHAKESPEARE.

Mrs. Horah looked uneasy.

"What has Mr. Meeke been doing now?" she inquired.

"He locked me in the schoolroom!" the boy answered; stamping and fuming with rage.

"What! Murdok Horah's son made a prisoner!" exclaimed the partial mother.

At this moment the door softly opened, and a thin, pale, dark-haired, clerical-looking young man quietly entered the room.

"What is the meaning of this, Mr. Meeke?" demanded the lady, imperiously, without waiting for the tutor to speak.

"Yes. Tell my mother how you locked me up in the schoolroom, you sneak!" fiercely exclaimed the boy.

"Murdok, my dearest, gentlemen should not use bad language," said the lady, in a gentle, almost deprecating tone. Then, turning to the tutor, she spoke, sharply: "Now, explain this, if you please, sir."

"Madam," said the young man, with quiet dignity, "first let me say that I have come to tender my resignation of the position I have held in your family for a few weeks, without the slightest benefit to your son. I find that I fail to be useful here."

The lady looked troubled, as well she might, for this was the fourth tutor who had been engaged for the rebellious boy, and who had thrown up his position, all within the last year. But she would defend the lad, right or wrong.

"Then I fully agree with you, Mr. Meeke, that if you cannot perform the duties of your position as my son's tutor, you had better resign. But, will you kindly inform me why you subjected him to the mortification of imprisonment in the schoolroom?"

"Yes! Tell her!" defiantly exclaimed Murdok.

"Certainly, Mrs. Horah," said the young man, answering the lady, but ignoring the interruption of the boy.

"Master Horah spends a great deal too much time with the negro boys in the woods or on the hills, engaged, I am led to believe, in robbing birds' nests, and——"

"Take care, sir!" interjected the proud mother. "Murdok Horah's son could not 'rob' anything."

"Well, madam, no doubt the birds of the air, as well as the land and timber, are his own; still, he spends a great deal of time in——"

"Outdoor sports, as a spirited boy naturally would," interrupted the lady.

"I was about to say in the company of the negro boys."

"They are his servants, to attend him in his rambles."

The tutor bowed in silence.

"But you have not given me the explanation I required, Mr. Meeke."

"I beg your pardon, madam. I was about to do so. This afternoon, when I insisted that he should finish a Latin exercise—a work of only an hour or two, but at which he has been trifling for several days——"

"You should have had patience with him," exclaimed the fond and foolish mother.

The teacher, taking no notice of the interruption, continued:

"I told him he must finish the task before he left the schoolroom, and for that reason I kept him in after hours. He refused to study, however, and at length started up and declared that he would go out, lesson or no lesson. I rose, intercepted him, locked the door, and put the key in my pocket. Then the boy dashed at the window, threw it up with so much violence as to break the glass, jumped from it to the shed, and from the shed to the ground, at the imminent risk of his life and limb."

The mother shuddered, but soon controlled herself, and said:

"I see, Mr. Meeke, that you are not the right sort of a man to have charge of such a spirited youth as my son. You lack moral influence. Let me have your bill at once, and order the gig as soon as you please to take you to the railway station."

The young teacher bowed and withdrew. The same night he left Horah Hall forever.

"And now for the fifth trial," said the imprudent woman to herself. "Certainly, capable tutors are extremely hard to find."

Meanwhile, young Murdok went to find his former nurse, who had years before returned to her cabin, and to her duties in the poultry yard, but who still retained a strong hold on such affections as the selfish lad had to bestow. It was late, and he found her seated at her cabin door, enjoying the cool September evening.

"Well, I've bounced Meeke, Aunt Cely!" he said, throwing himself down on the grass before the cabin door.

"That's right, Master Murdok! Don't you let any of them low-life white trash, that have to go out and work for a living, crow over you! You are a gentleman born, you are. You are master of Horah Hall, you are. And don't you ever forget it for one minute," said Celia, with a singular gleam in her piercing, black eyes.

"You bet your life I won't! And now I am going up to the mountain, with Len, and Gad, and Nick, to set traps for rabbits," exclaimed the boy, running off toward the field negroes' quarters.

Young Horah showed a strong predilection for the society of the negro boys, whose submission, admiration and flattery delighted him. But his company, on the contrary, was no boon to them. His behavior was as capricious as his temper. At one time he would be familiar and affectionate, at another, despotic and supercilious. Celia had some time before gently expostulated with him on this subject, representing that he, as master of Horah, lowered himself by associating with the black boys. But he very sharply told her to mind her own business, for he would not put up with her interference. When the quadroon ventured to speak to her mistress about the young master's daily companions, that lady haughtily replied:

"There is too wide a difference, they are too far below him, for him to be affected by their company. You might as well object to his hounds. These boys are his servants, who follow him as his dogs follow—to do his bidding. Let me hear no more of such complaints of your young master, Celia."

"Heaven forbid that I should complain of him, madam! I am only jealous of his dignity."

"His dignity is too real, too solid, too high, to be affected in that manner. You might as well dream that a young prince would risk his dignity when he pats his favorite pony."

Celia smiled in a peculiar manner; but from that time she never expostulated with mother or son on the habits of the young outlaw; indeed, it was only for fear of his "lowering himself" that she ever had ventured to interfere.

Isabel Horah had now something to vary the dull monotony of her secluded life. Early the next morning she

took Servia and little Zenobia with her in the old family carriage, and, with Si on the box, drove to Mistyrock, and surprised old Ben Bowen by the largest order she had ever given him.

Having filled all the available space in the carriage with parcels, she turned homeward, but stopped on the way to call on Col. Pryor, to seek his counsel as to the best manner in which she should go to work to find Zenobia's kindred. If she surprised old Bowen by her order, she certainly amazed Col. Pryor by her visit; for never before had she honored the "Notches" with a call.

Col. Pryor, who was seated, smoking, on the piazza, this beautiful September morning, saw the well-known carriage draw up, and, before the negro boy, who was raking the grass in front of the house, could go to open the gate, he threw away his cigar and ran to welcome the pretty widow.

"Mrs. Horah, this is indeed an honor," he said, beaming with delight, as he opened the carriage door and held out his hand to help her down.

"Thank you, colonel," said the widow, stepping lightly to the ground.

"Ah, I see you have your new maid and her child with you," he remarked, catching sight of the other passengers in the carriage.

"Yes; but they will not get out. It is of them I wish to speak to you in private," she replied, as they walked up the steps of the piazza.

"Will you come into the parlor?" he asked, standing a little on one side of the front door to let her precede him.

"Oh, no; thank you. I prefer to sit out here, if you please," she said, seating herself in one of the home-made chip chairs.

"About the girl and her child, you say, my dear madam. Well, is it to approve or to reproach?" he inquired, with one of his frequent laughs.

"Neither; but to thank you very much"—the colonel bowed—"and to shock you not a little!"

"Ah!" he exclaimed, expectantly. What was she about to tell him? Had the new girl turned out to be a thief, or a murderess, or what?

"That little girl who was sold to you with Servia as her child, is not hers at all," continued Mrs. Horah.

Col. Pryor looked surprised and curious.

"She is not a slave; not a negro, but a freeborn white child, the daughter of a Spanish lady and gentleman who were lost on the steamer *Errand Girl.*"

"My God!" breathed the colonel, in dismay.

"She was saved from the sea by Servia—that is, the poor girl, who is a strong swimmer, held the child up until both were rescued by a boat from the *Carrier Dove.* Now, what I want of you, colonel, is to help me to find the friends of this injured child, if she has any."

"And to prosecute the infernal scoundrel—oh, I beg your pardon, madam—who sold her to me."

"And to lose no time about it, colonel. What shall we do first? What can we do this very day?" impatiently inquired Isabel Horah.

"It seems incredible that such wickedness should be perpetrated. But I have always believed a slave trader to be capable of any crime under heaven—I should say, over the other place. Whenever one of them ventures to set foot on my land I hunt him off with the hounds. My niggers have standing orders to do that, and I believe they are the only orders which they never, never disobey! Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the colonel, in spite of the gravity of the discussion.

"I am afraid I imposed on you a very disagreeable task, Col. Pryor," said Mrs. Horah.

"Oh, no! Quite a congenial one! You know it is a very different thing getting a nigger out of the clutch of these rascals—beg your pardon again, madam—and putting them in their power."

"But, colonel, what are we to do about this poor child?"

"Mrs. Horah, are you quite sure that your suspicions point to the truth?"

"They are not suspicions! They are certainties—as far as they go, I mean. The little one is Spanish, for she prattles only in Spanish; but whether she comes from Spain, the West Indies, Brazil or Mexico, I cannot tell. That is what I wish you to help me to find out."

"Excuse me for a moment," said the colonel, rising and going into the house.

Presently he returned, with a pile of papers in his hand, saying:

"A day or two ago I saw an account in a Washington paper of the wreck of the *Errand Girl,* off Point Lookout; but as I thought I had heard all the particulars from Wharton, I just glanced over it without paying much attention; for you know, madam, shipwrecks are not very cheerful reading."

While he was speaking the genial colonel looked carefully over his file of papers. Isabel Horah watched him anxiously.

"Ah! here it is," he said, straightening out the first page of the paper and reading:

"'TERRIBLE DISASTER ON THE CHESAPEAKE BAY.—Wreck of the steamer *Errand Girl* off Point Lookout. Twenty-six persons lost. Four rescued by the schooner *Carrier Dove.*'"

"Read the lists! Read the lists of the lost and saved," eagerly exclaimed Mrs. Horah.

Col. Pryor cast his eyes down the column. The first names on the list startled both reader and hearer. They were as follows:

"Lorenzo de Leon, Cadiz, Spain.

"Dolores de Leon, Cadiz, Spain.

"Maisa Moreno, Cadiz, Spain."

Other names followed, but they were native ones, so the lady impatiently interrupted the reader by exclaiming:

"Those were evidently the parents and nurse of the Spanish child! I heard her ask for Maisa several times. Besides that, Servia told me her nurse was named Maisa. Run your eyes down to the names of those rescued. See if there is a colored child named among them.

Col. Pryor complied with her request, and read:

"William Wharton, Baltimore, Md.

"Zenobia de Leon, Cadiz, Spain."

"Benjamin Godfrey (colored), St. Mary's County, Md.

"Servia Godfrey (colored), St. Mary's County, Md."

"There, now! You see! You see, Col. Pryor, that the girl told the truth! You see what a foul wrong has been done!" exclaimed the lady, in great excitement, for al-

though ever since her interview with the child she had believed in the truth of Servia's statement, yet this absolute confirmation of her faith powerfully affected her.

"Yes; I do see!" said the colonel, checking himself in a malediction of more strength than elegance.

"I suppose the names on the lists are authentic? I know that two, Servia and Zenobia, are so, of course; but the others. How did the papers get such lists, when nearly everybody was lost?" uneasily inquired Mrs. Horah.

"My dear lady, without any difficulty. They get a list of passengers from the booking agent at the steamer's office. They get the list of saved from the rescuing vessel. They subtract the list of saved from the list of passengers, and the remainder are lost, of course."

"How did they get the name of the little girl so well?"

"Her name, like that of her nurse and her parents, must have been on the list of passengers. And, of course, Servia, who knew something of the child she had saved, must have talked about her to the captain of the schooner and his wife. The whole report of the disaster was taken from the story of Capt. Miles Tawney, of the *Carrier Dove*. Wharton might have given some information, but doubtless he kept out of the way. And as the devil—pray excuse me for mentioning him, madam——"

"You might as well mention him as Wharton!" exclaimed Mrs. Horah.

"I was going to say, as His Sulphuric Majesty often leaves his subjects in the lurch, he must have left this monster to forget that the publication of these lists might eventually lead to the detection of his crime."

"But when he saw it, as he must have seen it, it must have recalled to him his oversight of a possible peril to himself," remarked Mrs. Horah.

"Yes. So I shall lose no time in pursuing this wretch. Leave all these matters to me, my dear madam. I have nothing particular to do, and I should take great pleasure in serving you first, and punishing that scoun—pardon me, madam—demon as he deserves. I shall leave for Washington to-morrow."

"Not until I have sent you a check for your expenses," she was about to say," but, remembering the man's comparative poverty, and his sensitive pride on account of that

poverty, she refrained, and answered the more warmly, "I thank you from my very soul! This is prompt kindness and help, indeed. I know not how to thank you enough."

Her ardent manner set the colonel's heart into a blaze.

"Ah, my dearest lady!" he said, slowly taking her hand. But then he stopped suddenly and dropped it, and sighed. This was not the time, he felt, just when he was laying her under obligations, to take advantage of the circumstances, and press his suit.

"I must go now," she said, rising, with a flush on her face. Then, perceiving that he was hurt, either by the thought of his own indiscretion, or the fear of having displeased her, and feeling really kindly and gratefully toward the good man, she suddenly added: "And there is another matter in which I must trouble you, my good friend."

"A hundred, if you will, in which you can only delight me!" promptly replied the colonel.

"Thank you. It is this: While you are in Washington, please try to find me another tutor for Murdok."

"What! Is Meeke going?" inquired the colonel, in some dismay.

"He's gone. Went yesterday. And a good riddance. There never was anything like the worthlessness of those young men who come out here, professing to teach boys! There is not one of them, so far as I have tried them, who is any more fit to train a boy than to govern a kingdom!"

"I am very sorry. I had thought Meeke rather a fine young fellow," said the colonel. "His conscience had often pricked him for not doing his duty toward his fair young neighbor in warning her of the evil she was bringing on her son by her overindulgence of him; but, alas! he was so much in love with the pretty widow that he dared not risk the least criticism of her course.

"Meeke is an idiot! They are all idiots!" she asserted, comprehensively, as she drew on her gloves.

"I will do my best to find you a satisfactory person this time," he said.

At this moment a negro woman, who knew the rules of the house too well to wait for orders, came out on the piazza with a tray on which cake and wine were neatly arranged.

Col. Pryor poured out the wine and pressed his visitor to partake. She declined, but said, with a smile:

"I will take a piece of cake to the carriage for the little Zenobia. And I will ask you to give it to her, so that you may see for yourself how the small lady will receive it," added Isabel Horah, with a smile.

The colonel would have carried the whole cake, but the lady shook her head, saying:

"No, no! Would you make the child ill?"

Then she cut a dainty slice and handed it to the colonel. They walked to the gate, outside of which the carriage waited.

"How do you do, my good girl? I hope you like your new place?" said the genial colonel, as he reached the carriage door.

"Thank you, sir; yes," replied Servia.

"And the little one? Have some cake, pet?" he asked.

The little child took the offered dainty. Then bowed her little, black, curly head, and said:

"*Gracias, mi señor.*"

"She is a princess!" exclaimed the colonel, with enthusiasm. "I should be proud of such a little daughter. I will tell you what, my dear madam, if no one should turn up to claim the little darling, I should be only too glad to adopt her as my own. I have no daughter, you know."

"Neither have I, sir," jealously replied the lady, as she allowed him to help her into the carriage.

"Good-by. A thousand thanks for your kindness," she said, waving her hand as the horses started.

He lifted his hat and bowed.

CHAPTER XII.

AFTER WHARTON.

All common things, each day's events,
That with the hour begin and end,
Our pleasures and our discontents,
Are rounds by which we may ascend.
—LONGFELLOW.

Eager as any youth to please his sweetheart, middle-aged Nat Pryor started up long before daylight, roused his

coachman, and ordered his carriage to take him to the railway station, in order to catch the first train for Washington.

He reached the city about nine o'clock in the evening, too late to do any business that night; so, as he was very much fatigued, he went to his hotel—the Metropolitan—got his supper and went to bed. He slept the sound sleep of wholesome weariness, yet not too deeply to dream of his ladylove all night long.

Early next morning he arose, dressed, breakfasted and went out, directing his steps straight to the nearest magistrate's office. He found the place half full, as usual, of delinquents who had been locked up the night before, most of them for small offenses. Many of these were discharged with a reprimand; others were let off with a light fine. The colonel had to wait until the office was clear. Then the magistrate, who knew the visitor, turned to him with a smile, saying:

"How do you do, colonel? Glad to see you. When did you arrive?"

"Only last night," replied the colonel. "You seem to have had a very busy morning," he continued.

"Yes; but no serious cases, thank Heaven! Only some unfortunates whose petty offenses are prompted rather by poverty and want than by viciousness," said the kind-hearted magistrate. "But can I do anything for you, colonel?"

"Yes. Give me a warrant for the most atrocious scoundrel that ever disgraced the form of man!" exclaimed Nat Pryor, bringing his fist down with emphasis upon the top of the justice's desk.

"Good God!" ejaculated the magistrate. "Explain yourself, Pryor! Who has been murdered?"

"Murdered! You, a magistrate with so much experience, and think that a murderer must necessarily be the most heinous of criminals! I tell you, sir, the infernal crime I am about to lay to the charge of a devil named Wilful Wharton is as much worse than murder as murder is worse than—well, than a quarrel over toys between babies," growled the colonel.

Squire Holmead knew Nat Pryor's wild way of speaking when excited; so he now quietly said:

"Will you sit down, colonel, and tell me all about it in an informal way before we proceed further?"

Nat Pryor dropped into a chair, wiped his red, perspiring face, and told his story, adorning the narrative with many expletives and not a few oaths.

When he had finished, the magistrate, who had listened in attentive silence, beckoned to his clerk, a short, fat young man, with a red nose, who sat at a desk at the end of the room, apparently engaged in writing, but who had heard every word of the sensational story.

"Draw a chair to this table," said the magistrate, "and prepare to take down the statement Col. Pryor is about to make."

The clerk walked leisurely to the table and took his seat.

"Now, colonel, we are ready to receive your formal statement," said the squire, turning toward him.

"Haven't I told you all about it?" impatiently demanded Nat Pryor.

"Well, not exactly. Not—shall I say—consecutively?" replied the magistrate, remembering the many diversions and digressions, denunciations and maledictions that had embellished his story.

"Then why the devil did you give me the trouble of going over the matter twice?" demanded the colonel.

"Because, my dear sir, the charge is so grave that I thought it best to hear the circumstances in an informal manner first, in order to judge whether I could receive it officially. You understand?"

"Oh! All right! Fire away with your formulas! Bring a Bible. Bring a cord of Bibles! I'll swear on 'em all to everything I've said!"

"Not at all necessary, my dear sir. But pray compose yourself, and make your statement in the calm, cold, matter-of-fact manner so serious a charge demands."

"Cold, calm! Good God, squire! Am I a frozen frog? Not to grow hot over such a hellhound as that Wharton, sir? But I will stick to the facts, and avoid cursing the scoundrel, if I can!" exclaimed the colonel, walking over to the water cooler, and helping himself to about a pint

of ice water, which he quaffed as a preparative to self-control.

"Now I'm ready," he said, returning and throwing himself into a chair, while the clerk drew a sheet of paper before him, and, with pen in hand, sat prepared to take down the accuser's words.

Then Nathaniel Pryor, of The Notches, Mistyrock, Virginia, formally charged Wilful Wharton, traveling trader, with having, on the seventeenth day of September, instant, abducted and sold into slavery a free white child, by name Zenobia de Leon, daughter of Lorenzo de Leon and Dolores, his wife, all of Cadiz, Spain.

When the statement was finished, the clerk read it over to the deponent, who signed it in the presence of the magistrate. A warrant for the arrest of Wilful Wharton was duly made out.

"Now," inquired the magistrate, "what witnesses, besides yourself, as to the party to whom the Spanish child was sold, can testify to the facts?"

"The brothers, Gideon and Gilbert Godfrey, of St. Mary's County, Maryland, who can testify that the girl said to have been the mother of the child never had a child. Then the officers of the schooner *Carrier Dove*, who rescued the girl, the child and the trader. Lastly, the little girl herself should be produced in court—not that she is capable of giving evidence, but that all may see she is not a quadroon, but a child of Spanish birth, who cannot speak a word of any other language. The young woman, Servia, could bear the strongest possible testimony, but, as the law now stands, it would not be received."

"Now, where is this Wharton most likely to be found, or heard of?" inquired the magistrate, as he rang a bell and placed the warrant in the hands of a police officer, who answered the summons.

"At the slave pen on the island, not that it belongs to him, or that he lives there. He is a bird of passage, as well as of prey. He lodges his merchandise there on occasion. I will go with the officer, if there is no objection," added the colonel.

"None whatever, of course," replied the squire.

The colonel and the policeman left the office together. The distance they had to go was not great, so the officer

would have walked, but the colonel was so impatient that he hailed the first passing hack, and they got into it and were driven over the Seventh Street bridge to the island, and after a short drive they reached the slave pen.

The hack drew up at the gate, and the two men alighted.

The keeper opened the gate in response to the policeman's knock. He was surprised at the sight of the officer, but not the least dismayed, for they were all law-abiding citizens at the pen, breaking none of man's statutes, so they had no cause to be afraid. Merely nodding to the officer, feeling some curiosity as to the nature of his business, he turned with cordial respect to the colonel, in whom he recognized a recent customer, and anticipated a possible one again.

"Walk in, gentlemen. How can I serve you this morning?" he said, at length.

"Where is Mr. Wharton? Is he here?" inquired the officer.

"Oh! It is he, then, who is wanted," thought the keeper, as he answered:

"Mr. Wharton, sir, is down in the lower counties, making purchases."

"Now, that is rather indefinite. In what county, and in what part of the county is he?" inquired Col. Pryor.

"Oh! You are interested, too, are you?" thought the keeper, as he answered, with an air of candor: "That's what no man can tell, sir. He may be in Prince George's, Calvert or St. Mary's; I could not tell you which, if my life depended on it."

"When is he expected back?" next inquired the colonel.

"By Saturday's steamer, I think, sir, which gets in any time between noon and midnight. There is no certainty as to the precise hour with any of these river boats."

"Where does the man put up when he is in the city?" inquired the policeman.

"Steamboat Hotel, foot of Sixth Street, sir, for sake of convenience. It is there where most of the boats land," replied the keeper.

Now, whether the officer believed all this, or doubted it on "general principles," was not determined, for, at this moment the conversation was interrupted by a sound of weeping and wailing, and great lamentation, which came

from a corner of the yard, toward which they all instinctively turned their eyes.

There they saw a tall, stalwart young negro, sitting on the ground, with his back uncomfortably leaning against the angle of the wall, and his hands and knees drawn up to his chin, and his head bowed, with his face buried in his hands. He was sobbing, crying and groaning as if his heart would break.

"What on earth is the matter with that poor fellow?" inquired the kind-hearted Nat Pryor.

"Oh, Lord! sir, he is a nat'ral-born idiot!" exclaimed the keeper. "He is a great aggravation to us all. Just look at him now. A great, tall and strong buck nigger! as healthy as a horse! Ought to fetch a thousand dollars any day. Yet his owner can't find a purchaser for him on account of his carryings on."

"Why, what does he do?" inquired Col. Pryor. "Does he get drunk?"

"Bless you, no, sir! He's a teetotaler. One of 'The Water of Jordan Society,' he calls himself."

"What is his fault, then?"

"Why, don't you see for yourself, sir? No. You only see about one-half of it. He spends all his time in weeping and wailing, or praying and exhorting. He hardly ever eats or sleeps. Indeed, if he goes on in this way, we are afraid he will go mad, and then Wharton will not only lose his purchase money, but he will have to support a raving lunatic."

"And serve him right, the scoundrel! Only I don't think he will be called upon to support anyone for some time to come. I think he himself will be boarded and lodged at the expense of the government!" hotly exclaimed the colonel. And then he crossed the yard to speak to the negro.

CHAPTER XIII.

POOR BEN.

We dwell with fears on either hand,
  Within a daily strife,
And spectral problems waiting stand,
  Before the gates of life.

The doubts we vainly seek to solve,
The truths we know are one,
The known and nameless stars revolve
Around the central sun.—WHITTIER.

"What is your trouble, my poor fellow?" kindly inquired Col. Pryor, as he reached the spot, and stood before the bowed form of the man.

The poor fellow raised his head, with its tear-stained face, and gazed stupidly through its mist on the questioner without recognizing him.

But Nat Pryor, who never forgot a face, recognized Ben, the friend of Servia, whom he remembered to have seen with the girl during his negotiation for her purchase. He looked down upon the man with a conflict of emotions.

It had always been said of Nat Pryor that his keen sense of humor would be his ruin yet! That he would finally laugh himself into everlasting perdition! Indeed, it is a fact that the only time he ran for the legislature he lost the election by laughing in the wrong place, and at the wrong man. Now, gazing at poor Ben with real compassion at the bottom of his heart, he had all he could do to repress an outburst of laughter at the huge, hulking fellow blubbering like a baby. Compassion triumphed, however.

"What is the matter with you, my poor man?" he again kindly inquired.

"Oh, marse!" cried the negro, half choked with sobs, and blinded by tears, yet eager to pour out his sorrows into a sympathizing ear; "Servia's gone! an' po' mammy's dead! an' I'se lef' 'lone on de yerf! I wis' I'd ben jownded 'long ob de udders, I do!"

"Your mother's dead, poor fellow? Was she here with you?"

"Oh, no, marse; she were down yon'er in ole S'. Mary's County, 'long o' de Godf'eys. Po' Servy, she were my 'panion in misforshun, po' Servy were! An' de day afo' she were tuk 'way f'om yere, she yit a letter, Servy did—'deed she did, marse—yit a letter fo' me to my po' mammy down dere on de Godf'ey farm; an' yist'day I got a ans'er, yit by my youn' marse, Gibbut Godf'ey, an' tole me po' mammy tuk cole gwine to meetin', an' was koched in de yain, an' she di' ob informashun ob de lun's. An' she lef' her bressin' to me, an' I must' be sure to meet her

in hebbin', po' mammy said. An' she helt hold of my letter wot Servy yit. w'ich it comfitted her tell she died."

"Well, as she was a good woman, she has gone to heaven, out of all her troubles in this world. And if you be a good man you will meet her there, as she said you must," replied the colonel, sympathetically.

"Oh, yes, marse; I kno's all dat; but it doane do me no good jus' now, fust off. An' dere's Servy wot might a ben a comfut to me, gone, too, an' I dunno w'ere she is, nudder!"

"Well, my poor fellow, at least I can give you some comfort in regard to Servia. She has a good home and a kind mistress over there in Virginia. Here, take this handkerchief and wipe your eyes," said Nat Pryor, drawing his own red bandanna from his pocket and handing it to Ben, who had been rubbing first one sleeve and then the other across the fountains of his tears.

"T'anky, marse! Yo's mighty good ter me," said the negro, handing back the handkerchief after he had used it.

"No, keep it. I make you a present of it," laughed Nat Pryor.

"T'anky, marse. Now, marse, you said po' Servy did git a good, kine mist'ess. W'ere is—— Why, good gwacious, marse, if yo' aine de same ge'man wot bote po' Servy!" cried Ben, recognizing his visitor when he saw him through his undimmed eyes for the first time.

"Yes," said the colonel.

Down on his knees went Ben, and up went his clasped hands.

"Oh, marse!" he cried. "Buy me, too, marse! Buy me, too! I wan' ter go were Servy's gone. Oh, my deah marse, buy po' Ben, an' ca'wy me ter po' Servy."

"Is Servia your sister?" gently inquired the colonel.

"No-o-o, marse; not my sister. She wer' my 'panion in misforshun. Oh, marse, buy me an' ca'wy me 'way to Servy!"

"Was she your gal, then?"

"No-o-o, marse! Servy nebber looked at me dat way. Servy was raised mos' like a lady. Servy could read an' write, Servy could. An' Servy wer' a good frien' ter me an' mammy, Servy wer'. Oh, marse, woane yer buy me an' ca'wy me home ter Servy!"

"Why, my poor fellow, I never bought or sold a nigger in my life! I never would have anything to do with the infernal trade!"

"But, marse, didn't yer buy po' Servy?" inquired Ben, in a voice beginning to break.

"Oh, yes—to my shame be it said, and I wish some one would kick me for it," he added, mentally—"but not for myself; for a neighbor, a lady who asked me to do so as a favor to herself."

"An' so do I, marse! I axes ob yer as a feber ter me, sah. Oh, do, marse! Oh, do, sah! fo' de Lor' A'mighty's sake!" pleaded Ben, still down on his knees, and lifting his clasped hands in an agony of prayer.

"Get up, man!" exclaimed Nat Pryor, impatiently, and more because of the embarrassing position in which he found himself, between his good nature and compassion on the one hand, and his keen sense of the ridiculous on the other. "Get up, I say. I tell you, once for all, I will not have anything to do with this infernal traffic."

"Oh, marse!" exclaimed the negro, clasping the speaker's knee, and totally misunderstanding him; "Oh, marse, doane say dat! Doane call me hard names, an' say yo' woane hab nuffin' ter do wid me. I aine no 'ferna! chaffic! 'Deed I aine, marse! I 'spise ter be sich a t'ing as a chaffic! Yo' yite ter Marse Gibbut Godf'ey, an' ax him if I's a chaffic. I'se a good, hones', cullud man, marse. Doane yer laff at me, marse, doane!" insisted Ben, while tears of injured innocence stood in his eyes.

"If you are no 'chaffic,' how did you come to be sold? Niggers are generally sold for some fault. I reckon you must have been a pretty bad chaffic," said Nat Pryor, shaking with suppressed laughter at the negro's misapprehension of the word.

"No-o-o, marse! It was no fau't of we as we was sole. It was all 'long o' dem po' white trash wot keep de sto' doun der in Calber's toun, were de Godf'ey fam'ly dealed so many years. It were dem low-life white trash as wanted ob dein money, jes' as if 'twan't honor 'nouf fer sich to hab de Godf'eys deal 'long o' dem anyhow, 'dout wantin' de money besides? So dey jes seize me, an' po' Servy, an' de two udders, an' sole us!—dem po', mean,

low-life white herrin's did!" exclaimed Ben, who had worked himself into a fever of indignation.

"But I suppose the poor shopkeepers might have really needed their money," Col. Pryor ventured to say.

"Wot ef dey did? Yeckon Marse Godf'ey wanted ob his money wot was owed ter him, too; but he'd bit off his tongue 'fo' he'd demean hisself by axin' fo' it!"

"That was unfortunate sensitiveness."

"I doane kno' 'xactly wot yer mean, marse; but I tell yer dis one fing 'bout Marse Godf'eys! Dey nebber 'fused to len' a gemman money, an' dey nebber ax fer it arterwards—no, sah! Tell yer wot Marse Gidyun done little while ago. Y'ung Marse Jack Pe'y ax him to len' him fifty dollahs to go to Baltimore wid! On a spree, too. An' Marse Gidyun hadn't a cent in de worl'. An' wot yer fink he did, marse? 'Fuse de young ge'man? No, 'deed! He jes' sole de gray filly, wot was de bes' little beas' on de place, an' got de money to len' Marse Jack Pe'y. Dat's a ge'man's way ob doin' kindness! But dem dere po' white trash! Phew!" exclaimed Ben, with infinite scorn.

It just occurred to Col. Pryor to examine Ben on the subject of the little Spanish child whom Wharton had sold. But first he must speak to the policeman, whom he feared he had been detaining too long. He turned away, but Ben seized hold of him, throwing his strong arms around both his legs, so that he could not stir without violence, and exclaiming all the while:

"Oh, marse, doane yer go an' 'sert me in my 'fliction! Doane yer, marse, as yer hab a soul to be sabed! 'Member de widder an' de orfin, marse! Leas'ways de orfin, case de widder is gone to glory! But 'member de po' orfin boy as kneels ter yer! Buy me, marse! Buy me! If yer doane, I's feared I shill kill myse'f de fust chance I gits."

"Now, look here, you great, big booby baby! I am not going to desert you just yet. I mean to have some talk with you first. I am just going to speak to that man yonder, whom you see leaning up against the gate, talking to the keeper. Let me go."

"Oh, marse, yo'se de fus' gemman as ebber spoke a kine word ter me ebber sence I was jagged 'way f'om de ole farm! An' yer wouldn't go fer ter deceive a po', mudder-

less orfin boy, would yer now, marse? Yer will com' back, woane yer, now?"

"Of course I will, you idiot! Let me go," laughed Nat Pryor.

The negro unwillingly relaxed his hold, and the colonel escaped, and, still laughing, crossed the yard and beckoned to the policeman, who immediately came to his side.

"Look here," said Col. Pryor, "it seems that we cannot nab the fellow here; at least not without a search warrant to go through the premises, so——"

"I don't think he is here, sir; I don't indeed! I have been talking with the keeper. Of course, I have not let on what Wharton is wanted for, and I am sure the man does not suspect. Nor do I think he would shield the culprit. He—I have known him for years—is as honest a man as——"

"As anyone of his peculiar calling can be expected to be," interrupted Col. Pryor, with a smile. "But what I wanted to say to you was this, that I will not detain you longer if any business of yours should be urgent. I wish to have a talk with the man here, who came from the same farm and was sold to Wharton at the same time as this girl Servia. Only let me know where I can see you later in the day."

"Well, sir, until three o'clock you can see or hear of me at Squire Holmead's office. Later than that I will wait for you if you will give me your address."

"Certainly. The Metropolitan."

"Thank you, sir. I am going now to the Steamboat Hotel, to look up our man there. I doubt about his being out of the city, though the keeper seems to believe that he is. If I do not find him, or hear of him there, I will return to the squire's office."

"Quite right. I shall see you before night, then," said the colonel. And the two men parted company; the policeman leaving the yard, and the colonel returning to the corner where he had left Ben.

"My boy," he said, standing before the negro, with his hands in his pockets, "do you remember the little child whom your friend Servia was taking care of while she was here?"

"Oh, doane I jes! 'Member dat yittle fing? I reckon I

jes does!" said Ben, in a very gentle voice, as he drew from his bosom a rusty black cord, to which was attached a small crucifix, on which he gazed fondly.

"What is that you have there?" inquired the colonel.

"On'y jes a yittle chinket de chile guv me, bress her yittle heart!"

"Will you let me look at it?"

Ben took it from his neck and put it into the hand of the colonel. Nat Pryor examined it curiously. It was carved from a piece of bone. The work was very fine; every muscle in the perfect form, every feature in the divine face, was distinctly yet delicately cut. Col. Pryor saw at a glance that this was no trifle, but something of much higher value than either the baby giver or man receiver could have known. It might also be of inestimable use to the child in helping to identify her in case it should be required.

"Ben, if you will let me have this I will give you five dollars for it," he said.

"Couldn't do it, marse. Couldn't do it no ways in dis worl'. Wouldn't part 'long o' dat chinket fer no money. No, sah!" said Ben, holding out his hand anxiously to regain his treasure.

"Let me look at it a little longer. I wish to read an inscription on the back," said the colonel, turning the crucifix in his hands. On the plain back of the cross were minutely engraved some foreign words that Nat Pryor could not understand. But he took his tablets from his pocket and drew a pencil from its slide, and carefully copied the cabalistic phrase. Then he returned the crucifix to its owner, who was still holding out his hands, almost crying for fear of losing it, and who kissed it fondly before returning it to its place in his honest bosom.

"You were very fond of that child, Ben?" said the colonel, as a feeler.

"Yes, marse; berry much. De yittle fing!"

"Was she your friend Servia's child?" inquired the colonel.

Ben stopped tucking away his keepsake, and stared the questioner a full minute in the face before he answered:

"Oh, marse, Servy wan't no mar'd 'oman! Servy wer' a youn' gal!"

"Oh!" said the colonel. "Then whose child was that? And how came she in Servia's care?"

"Now, the Lor' A'mighty knows whose chile she wer' fer I doane. Servy save' her life outen de sea, arter de shipwreck."

"Then she didn't come from the farm?"

"No, marse; sho she didn't nebber come f'om no farm! I nebber seed dat chile in all my life 'fo' dey foch her to de schooner! Den Servy she tell me, an' de cap'n's wife an' sudders, how de yittle fing was de chile ob a furrin lady an' gemman she see in de cabin ob de boat 'fo' de wreck com', w'en dey was bof jowned. Mouty good ob yo', marse, to let po' Servy take ca' ob dat youn' un tell dey fine her frien's. Servy's got her yit, marse, aine she?"

"Oh, yes. And now, my boy, I must bid you good-by. I wish you well, with all my heart," said the colonel, turning to leave the yard.

But Ben started forward and flung himself headlong on the ground at the colonel's feet, threw his arms again around the colonel's legs, and held him fast, while he poured out a torrent of passionate lamentations and prayers, almost drowned and smothered in a storm of tears, sobs and groans.

"Oh, marse! fer de lub o' de Lord, doane yer leabe a po' orfin boy 'dout any frien's yere in dis des'late wil'erness! Doane yer, marse! Buy me an' cawy me 'way ter Servy an' de yittle chile! Oh, marse, fer de Lord's sake! I'll be de bestest nigger yer ebber had in all de days ob yer life! I—I'll work day an' night, an' no wittels an' no close ob no 'count! Oh, marse! buy me! buy me! If yer doane I'll kill myse'f de wery fus' chance I gits, I know I will! An' den I shil go yite st'ait to de debbil, an' nebber se mammy ag'in!"

Tender-hearted Nat Pryor was overwhelmed by the passionate anguish of the poor, half-maddened fellow, and hastened to say:

"There, there! Do stop howling! You will alarm the neighborhood, and raise a crowd. Yes, yes! I will buy you! Of course I'll buy you! Your master is expected by the boat to-morrow afternoon. I will be here to see about buying you."

"Oh, marse! Will you! will you! will you!" chanted Ben, half delirious with joy.

"Indeed I will. And I will call the keeper here to witness my promise. Here, you, sir!" cried Nat Pryor, suiting the action to his word.

The keeper came up, looking inquiringly from the colonel to the negro.

"I want to tell you, so as you can tell Wharton, that I wish to buy this boy, if we can strike a bargain."

"I will tell him, sir. He will be glad to find so good a purchaser, no doubt."

"Good-by, Ben. Keep up a good heart. You shall see me again to-morrow afternoon, and by Monday night you shall see your friend Servia and the child," said Nat Pryor, holding out his hand to the negro, who seized it in both of his own, fondled it, and sobbed forth:

"May de good Lor' bress yer, marse, fer wot youse done fer me! Oh! you's jes woke up a bird in my buzzom wot is singin' 'Glory, Hallelujah!' like a sky full of anjils! I shil go 'long o' yo' an' I shill see Servy! An' oh, how happy I is!"

Nat Pryor tore himself with difficulty away from the grateful creature, nodded to the keeper and left the yard, entered the hack that was waiting for him on the outside, and gave the order:

"To the Metropolitan Hotel."

When he found himself alone in the carriage, bowling along toward the avenue, he gave way to a hearty fit of laughter, and laughed until his whole frame shook, and the tears ran down his cheeks.

"Well, Nat Pryor," he said to himself, when he had sufficiently recovered, "and now what do you think of yourself, eh? You, the sworn enemy of the most infernal traffic on the face of the earth! You, who always hunted nigger buyers off your place with hounds! You to allow yourself first of all to be sweetly smiled into consenting to buy a maidservant for a lady, and then, through that very act, to be howled into buying a manservant for yourself! Oh, Nat Pryor, Nat Pryor, you are going to the devil as fast as you can. Now, let no man dare to take the first downward step in evil. No, not even for a woman. Not under any pretense whatever. If he does he will get an

impetus he cannot arrest, and will run headlong to the bottom of the black abyss. And, Nat Pryor, you will end in becoming a professional nigger buyer, and be hunted off your own premises by your own hounds, according to your own orders! Ha! ha! ha! ha! Ho! ho! ho! ho-o-o!" He was so tickeld at the idea that he laughed until the hack drew up before the hotel.

CHAPTER XIV.

SEARCHING AND DODGING.

No action, whether foul or fair,
Is ever done, but leaves somewhere
A record, written by fingers ghostly,
As a blessing, or a curse.—LONGFELLOW.

Col. Pryor had just finished his dinner in the public dining room of the Metropolitan when a message was brought to him by a porter that a visitor was waiting to see him in the gentlemen's parlor.

He went thither immediately, and found Policeman Colby, standing with his hat in his hand.

"Take a seat, officer, and tell me what success you have had in hunting our man," said the colonel, leading the way to the end of the room furthest from the bar, before which stood some men whom the colonel did not desire as an audience, and throwing himself into an armchair.

The policeman followed his example and then said:

"As you did not call at the office, sir, I just thought, as I was passing this way, that I would drop in and tell you that I went to the Steamboat Hotel and made inquiries."

"Well, with what result?"

"Pretty much the same as that we met with at the pen, sir. Wharton is expected back there by the Baltimore steamer, which gets in to-morrow afternoon. So you see, sir, nothing more can be done to-night."

"No, of course not."

"But to-morrow I shall go down to the steamboat landing, and be on hand to watch for him as soon as he shall appear."

"Do you know him personally?—I mean only by sight, of course?" inquired the colonel.

"No, sir, I do not; and I was thinking, as you seem so much interested in his capture, I might venture to ask you to go with me to point him out, lest he should dodge me in the crowd."

"That I will do, with pleasure. But, officer, I have some business to transact with that man which I would like to complete before the arrest is made, if you can give me so much time. You could be near and keep him in sight, you know. My business would require only an hour or so; perhaps not even an hour."

"Anything consistent with my duty, sir, I would be happy to do for you. Perhaps, if you would kindly explain——"

"Oh, certainly," said Col. Pryor, bursting into a peal of laughter, before entering into any explanation.

Nat Pryor, as my reader may have discovered, was "Hail fellow, well met" with any honest man of any rank, though he sternly kept aloof from the opposite sort of every rank. And now, with a serio-comic air that sat drolly upon his good-natured face, he began:

"The fact is, I am turning nigger buyer myself!"

The policeman looked doubtful and disturbed.

"Well, the long and the short of it, officer, is that that poor idiot who has been making the pen a pandemonium with his howlings, as soon as he recognized me as the purchaser of 'Servy,' as he called the girl, begged and howled and shrieked at such a desperate rate for me to carry him home to 'Servy,' that, in fact, I have promised to purchase him from Wharton, who, I hear, is very anxious to part with him at a small advance. So, if you could give me time to conclude the purchase, I should be very thankful."

"I think we might manage it, sir. I might, as you say, keep an eye on the man all the time. But you know, sir, that the custody of my prisoner must not be risked."

"Of course not," assented the colonel.

"Well, then, where shall I meet you to-morrow, sir?"

"When you are ready to go down to the steamboat landing, you may call here for me. I will wait for you."

"All right, sir. Good-evening, sir." And the policeman bowed himself out.

The colonel sauntered down the room, and was quickly hailed by an old acquaintance—an old Washingtonian—who challenged him to a game of euchre.

He sat down at the table and played until bedtime, and got very badly beaten, for his thoughts wandered far from the game.

At about eleven o'clock the next morning, while Col. Pryor sat in the reading room of the hotel, perusing the morning papers, Policeman Colby made his appearance.

The colonel sprang up to meet him.

"I thought it was best to take time by the forelock, sir," said the officer, when the brief greetings were past; "for it is necessary for us to be at the landing when the steamer comes in, and there is no certainty as to the hour of her arrival. It is just as apt to be sooner as it is to be later than her usual time.

"How is that?" inquired the colonel, who was drawing on his gloves.

"Well, sir, it is this way. She's a coaster, and has her regular stopping places, and her delay at these will depend upon the amount of freight she may have to take aboard. Then, again, there are irregular stopping places where there are no wharfs, and where she has to send off a rowboat to the shore wherever she sees the signal of a red flag hoisted. If there should be a good many of these, she would be later reaching here. If there should be none, she would be sooner than her regular time."

"And there may not have been any delays yesterday, so she may arrive soon. Come, let's hurry! I would not miss our man for much, I can tell you," said the colonel, hastily taking his hat from the rack, and turning to leave the hotel.

The policeman followed closely.

Col. Pryor signaled a hack, which he and the policeman entered.

The colonel gave the order, "To the steamboat landing at the foot of Sixth Street," and they were driven off in that direction.

They reached the wharf in good time. The colonel paid the driver, dismissed the carriage, and sat in a cor-

ner of the porch of the hotel while awaiting the arrival of the boat.

There were loungers passing in and out from the porch to the bar within, and from the bar to the porch. But none of them came near the two men who had seated themselves at the other end. Col. Pryor gave his companion a cigar and lighted one for himself. They smoked in silence for some little time, and then the colonel took out his watch, looked at it and said:

"It's now half-past twelve. I'll go in and see if I can borrow a spyglass to look out for the boat."

He went into the hotel and in a few minutes returned with a glass in his hand. He raised it to his eye, focused it to his sight and pointed it down the river.

"I think I see her," he said, at length, lowering his glass and handing it to the policeman, adding: "You take it and look."

The latter obeyed, and after a trial of the instrument, said in returning it:

"Oh, no, sir; that is the Alexandria boat. She lands at Seventh Street wharf."

They resumed their seats and waited two long, dreary hours. Then their patience was rewarded, for, a few minutes after two o'clock, they sighted the *Baltimore*, which in due time came steaming, puffing and blowing up to the wharf.

There were a great many passengers on the deck—men, women and children, with great quantities of luggage, that seemed to indicate that they were summer sojourners returning in the cool September weather from seaside and mountain resorts. Some of the men leaped ashore before the gangplank could be adjusted, eager to reach their own destinations, or to secure hacks for their families.

Col. Pryor and Policeman Colby closely scanned everyone that passed them. But again and again, in answer to the policeman's silent look of inquiry, the colonel as silently shook his head. The gangplank was dropped and more men, together with women and children, poured over it to the shore, and dispersed, some to enter waiting private carriages; some to get into hired hacks or omnibuses, and others to walk away.

At length, when the passengers had all dispersed, and the place was deserted by all except the stevedores and idlers, the two men looked at each other in disappointment and perplexity.

"Clearly our man is not here," said the colonel.

"Are you sure he has not passed us in the crowd?" inquired the officer.

"Certain," replied the colonel.

"He may be still on the boat," suggested the policeman.

"That's so," exclaimed Nat Pryor, with sudden animation. "And, come to think of it, there is nothing more likely. You see, he can't be proud of his cursed vocation. He must have some sense of shame regarding it. And so he has probably kept his niggers below, and is waiting till the coast is clear before bringing them up and carting them off to the pen. We will watch here a little while, and if he does not show up, we will go on board and look after him. What do you say?"

"All right, colonel," assented the policeman.

They waited and watched. Stevedores and laboring men came and went between the boat and shore, but there was no sign of Wharton.

At length Col. Pryor suggested that they had waited long enough, and might now go on board and make inquiries. Policeman Colby agreed.

The two men boarded the steamer and asked to see the captain. A bluff old salt, whose only badge of rank was his gold-banded cap, came forward, pointed to his head by way of salute, and stood waiting for his visitors to make known their business.

"Capt. Spilman, I presume, sir?" said Col. Pryor, politely.

"The same, sir, at your service," replied the old sailor.

"Excuse my question, but did a—a—"—oh, how Nat Pryor hated to call the negro trader and child stealer a man!—"a—a—cursed scoundrel named Wharton come up by your boat to-day?"

"No, sir, he did not," replied Capt. Spilman, in no way surprised or offended at the strength of the colonel's expressions. He knew the use of strong language himself on occasions.

"He was expected by this boat," said the colonel, while

the policeman keenly but stealthily watched the countenance of the old seaman.

"Well, sir, he did not come by her this time, thank God!" bluntly exclaimed the captain.

"Why thank God?" inquired the colonel, while the policeman took mental notes.

"Why, sir, I had just as lief have the devil on my boat as him with flesh and blood freight! That's why!"

"Do you know where he is now?"

"Buying niggers down in the lower counties, I reckon. I know I took him down last week. Had to take him, curse him! Would have to take the devil if he came aboard and offered to pay his passage! Might I ask what you want with him?" inquired the captain, turning instinctively toward the policeman.

The latter exchanged glances of mutual intelligence with Col. Pryor, and then answered:

"On a matter I am not at liberty to discuss until we find the man; but if you read the daily newspapers, captain, you will not remain long in ignorance!"

"H'm! Just as I expected. He'll end his days in the penitentiary, if not on the gallows," said the old seaman, in a tone of satisfaction.

"Come, Colby, we need not detain the captain any longer. Good-afternoon, Capt. Spilman. We thank you for the information you have given us," said Col. Pryor, lifting his hat courteously as he turned away.

The old sailor pointed to his head and said, "Not at all," turned and went about his business, and was soon heard cursing somebody or other high and low, from his "eyes" to his "gizzard."

"We will go to the pen and make inquiries there; perhaps we can hear something; at all events, I promised that poor devil, Ben, to see him this afternoon. He would arouse the neighborhood with his howlings if I were to disappoint him," said Col. Pryor, as the two men left the boat in company and walked toward the slave pen.

It was quite late in the afternoon when they reached the gate. The policeman knocked and they were immediately admitted by the keeper in person. Almost the first thing Nat Pryor did after nodding to the man was to look across the yard toward Ben's corner, half expecting

the impulsive creature to run and fling himself into his arms, or more likely around his legs. But the shed was empty, "swept and garnished," evidently made ready for some new occupant. There was no sign of Ben about the place. Before even inquiring for possible news of Wharton, Nat Pryor turned to the keeper and said:

"I don't see Ben anywhere about here! Where is he?"

"That's more than I can tell, sir. Wharton came here quite unexpected last night and took him away," replied the keeper.

The colonel and policeman looked at each other in consternation.

"Skipped!" said the latter. "Got an inkling that something was up, and made tracks!"

"I thought you told us that he was to come by this afternoon's boat! How is it that he came last night?" demanded the colonel.

"By the cars, I reckon, sir," answered the keeper, taking the question literally. "And I was quite astonished at seeing him so suddenly."

"How did he account for his unexpected arrival?"

"No way at all, sir. When I expressed some surprise at seeing him he made no reply, but asked me to wake up that nigger, Ben."

"Had he other darkies with him?"

"Not one, sir."

"Did he explain the reason of coming empty-handed, so to speak, as well as unexpectedly?"

"No, sir. He never explained anything. He was flustered, and mum, and anxious to get away with his nigger."

"Did you tell him that I wished to purchase Ben," inquired the colonel.

"That I did, sir. I told him that the gentleman who bought the girl and child had come here to buy the boy."

"And what did he say?"

"He laughed and said: 'Then I shall get the lunatic off easier than I expected.' And I thought he meant that he would get him off his hands by selling him to you, but I found I was mistaken; for, when Ben came along grinning, and told him that he had found a new, good master, who was going to buy him and take him home to Servy,

Wharton said: 'I know. All right. I am going to take you right away to your new master.' And he winked at me. I don't approve of such deceit, but it was not any of my business, and, besides, it saved a hullabulloo that Ben would have raised, and bring the police, perhaps. So the boy went away quietly and gladly enough with his owner."

"Where did they go?" inquired the policeman.

"I couldn't tell you, sir. I have no idea. He would not answer any questions I asked him. He even resented them, sir."

"Did he take the negro away in a hack?"

"No, sir; they walked off."

"Then we cannot trace them by the hackman," said the colonel. "What time was it when they left here?"

"Between ten and eleven o'clock. His home is in Baltimore. He may have gone there," suggested the keeper, who did not seem inclined to shield the culprit.

"We had better make inquiries at the railway station," said the policeman.

"Would you think it wrong in me, gentlemen, to inquire what Wharton has been up to? What he is wanted for? For it does look now as if he had cut and run," said the keeper, who was as full of interest in the subject as the old steamboat captain had been.

The colonel and policeman again exchanged glances, and then the latter said:

"Well, as the fellow seems to have got an inkling that we are after him, I may as well tell you that I have a warrant for his arrest for child stealing."

"Yes," hotly exclaimed the colonel, "the accursed villain sold a free white child to me, along with the girl, Servia, as her own! And if I ever get sight of him, curse him! I will throttle him before the hangman has a chance!"

"Whew-e-e-e-ew!" breathed the keeper, in a long whistle. And then he would have asked a dozen questions, but the colonel hurried the policeman, who was himself only too anxious to go, and so bade a hasty good-afternoon to the man and hurried away.

"I am vexed enough at the rascal giving us the slip, but I am even more sorry for that poor wretch, Ben. Never

mind, he'll go mad some of these days and kill his tormentor. And that will save the State some expense," said Nat Pryor, as they walked toward the avenue.

Their first inquiries were made at the railway station, but without result. No ticket had been taken there from any man answering the description of Wharton, or who was accompanied by a negro man of any description. They visited every stage office, and every steamboat landing about Washington, without finding the slighest trace of the fugitive.

The next day Col. Pryor caused to be inserted in the principal newspapers two advertisements. One, offering one thousand dollars reward for the apprehension of Wilful Wharton, charged with the abduction and selling of a free white child into slavery; and another, asking for information concerning the next of kin to an infant girl about three years old, by name Zenobia de Leon, who was rescued from the wreck of the steamer *Errand Girl*, which was lost in a gale off Point Lookout, on the first of the present month.

Then, having done all he could in the premises, yet disappointed and disheartened, Nat Pryor took the morning train for Mistyrock, and went home to await further developments.

CHAPTER XV.

THE END OF WHARTON.

For 'tis the sport to have the engineer
Hoist with his own *petar*.—SHAKESPEARE.

The records of criminal jurisprudence show us that it is often by some trivial though fatal oversight on the part of the criminal that the most carefully contrived crimes are discovered.

Wharton's crime, however, was not premeditated, but impulsive. Maddened by the loss of two valuable young negro men in the wreck of the *Errand Girl*, and tempted by cupidity, opportunity and the delusive appearance of impunity, he had ventured to sell the free Spanish orphan, with the slave mulatto girl, falsely passing them off as

mother and child. He knew that, though the girl might at first opportunity reveal the fraud, her unsupported testimony could never be received against him; and there was no one left alive who could corroborate it. Ben, from his color and condition of slavery, and the child, from her infancy and ignorance, were equally incompetent witnesses. But he forgot the circumstance that the very incongruity of an alleged Maryland slave child prattling in a foreign language would in itself excite wonder, suspicion and comment, leading to investigation, and ending in discovery. He forgot, also, that the office of the *Errand Girl*, like that of every other steamer, kept a complete list of the passengers that sailed on every voyage; so that, on the last list of passengers on the doomed steamer would be found the names of the Spanish party, with that of the child among them. He forgot, finally, that the captain and crew of the *Carrier Dove* would give a correct list of the rescued pary, and among them would appear the name of the Spanish child; and that both these lists would identify her as the daughter of Lorenzo and Dolores de Leon, of Cadiz, Spain. Nor did he think of such awkward contingencies until they were suddenly forced on his attention.

He was not a newspaper reader; in fact, he seldom looked into a book or paper; so it was from sheer dullness, or what in a finer mind would be called *ennui*, that on the day of his embarkation on the steamer *Baltimore*, for a trading tour through the lower counties of Maryland, and when the boat was about halfway down the Potomac River, he picked up a copy of a morning paper, and at the head of the first column of the first page read:

"Further particulars of the wreck of the *Errand Girl*. Full lists of the lost and saved. Heroism of a slave girl."

In much nervous dread Wharton hastily read down the column, giving now a full account of the disaster to the steamer. In great trepidation he looked over the lists of the lost and saved. Among the former were the names of Lorenzo and Dolores de Leon, and Maisa Morena, all of Cadiz, Spain. Among the latter was the name of Zenobia de Leon, a child, of Cadiz, Spain. This was, in-

deed, sufficiently alarming; but, oh! damning disclosure! here, near the same column, was this heading:

"Heroic deed of a slave girl."

Then followed a full account of Servia's rescue of the little Spanish child, at the imminent risk of her own life. The article ended with the earnestly expressed hope of the writer that the friends of the rescued child would reward this heroic young girl by purchasing her freedom and giving her an education.

"D—— these meddling newspaper reporters!" fervently aspirated Wharton, from the very bottom of his heart. "They are worse than the detective police! They are always meddling with a man's business that is none of theirs, curse them! This will soon bring a hornets' nest about my ears! Now, if I am to keep out of the penitentiary, I must get out of the country, and durned quick!"

No one on the boat knew anything about his sale of the Spanish child, yet his stricken conscience, or rather his stimulated consciousness, led him to shrink from every eye, and avoid his fellow passengers as much as possible.

He went ashore at the first small wharf at which the steamer stopped, and waited there until he got a chance to board a small coasting schooner bound for Baltimore; thus, for the present, giving up his trading tour. With a fair wind he reached Baltimore on the evening of the next day, and took the night train for Washington, where he arrived about an hour before midnight. Already he feared the bloodhounds of the law were upon his track, yet he wished to secure his property, for he had little enough of it left now; and so he took advantage of the lateness of the hour, and the darkness of the night, to skulk over to the island and visit the pen, where his sudden appearance startled the keeper half out of his wits.

How the news that he received there confirmed his fears that the avengers were after him; how he deceived Ben with the tale that he was going to take him to his chosen master, who would in his turn take him home to Servia, has been already described.

After leaving the pen, Wharton did not risk returning

to the Washington station, but, followed by the negro, he walked on beside the railroad track until he reached the way station at Bladensburg, where he waited for the early morning train to come up.

While they sat on the outside of the ticket office Ben, who had been growing suspicious and uneasy, at length ventured to inquire:

"Fey is yer takin' ob me, Marse Wharton?"

"To your new master, you fool! Didn't I tell you so?" surlily replied the trader.

Ben was somewhat abashed by the tone of this answer, but was also too deeply troubled in his simple mind to be quite silenced, so he ventured again to say:

"I t'ought as my new marse were in Washington."

"No, you idiot! he went to Baltimore yesterday afternoon, and left word that I was to bring you after him. Now do you understand?" growled Wharton.

"Oh, yes, marse, I un'erstan's now. T'anky, marse," replied the simple negro, with his faith quite restored.

One more conversant with railroad travel might have wondered why Wharton had walked all the way to Bladensburg to take the Baltimore train, instead of taking it at Washington; but Ben knew nothing of railroads or railway stations. He did not know, therefore, where he now was, or what they were waiting for, and he was too shy to inquire.

It was not yet quite light when the roar of the approaching train was heard rushing upon them.

"My Lor' A'mighty, marse, w'at dat? Is it a yerfquake?" demanded Ben, in a panic of terror, as he heard the thunder of the train, and felt the tremor of the ground.

Wharton burst out laughing as he replied: "No, you fool! That is the train that took your new master to Baltimore yesterday, and will take us this morning."

The laugh and the reply restored Ben's failing courage, which might have entirely expired as the train snorted, throbbed and shook the earth in running up to the station.

When it stopped, several passengers got out, laughing and talking, and entered carriages that came out of the shadows of the trees to receive them, and they were

driven off, still laughing and talking. Their demeanor further confirmed Ben's restored courage. That rushing, snorting, fire-breathing monster was the most awful beast or devil he had ever dreamed of after overloading his stomach with too much hog and hominy for supper. But it could not be so horrid as it looked, when ladies and gentlemen came out of its insides, laughing and talking! All this passed quietly through Ben's mind, while the porters were throwing out the baggage, mail bags, etc.

There seemed to be no other passengers from this station when Wharton, with Ben, trembling with awe, entered the cars and took their seats. Just before the train started a man came rushing up, apparently out of the woods, and nothing but a carpetbag in his hands, and a ticket in his hatband, and jumped aboard the train. Ben stared, expecting something terrible to happen to that rash man for taking such a hasty liberty with such a horrid monster. The train started, however, without accident.

Ben sat near the window in the left-hand corner at the back of the smoking car, which Wharton had probably chosen because it was so full of smoke that he would be less likely to be recognized. Ben's master sat beside him, smoking as if for a wager.

The negro sat by his window and watched. He saw fields, fences and farms fly behind him with the swiftness of the wind. Ben stared with suspended breath, starting eyes and gaping mouth.

"Now the Lor' A'mighty hab messy on my po' soul! To be ca'ed 'way on a fing tearing off like mad, breavin' fire an' brimstone, an' throwin' de lan' behine it! Oh, Lor'! oh, Lor'!" he muttered to himself, unable to keep silent under such awful circumstances.

"Be quiet, you lunatic!" growled Wharton, in a deep, threatening voice.

"Oh, Lor', marse! but dis yere is jis' like a ho'id dream!" muttered Ben, in a tone of awe.

"If you speak another word I will take you out and set you on the top of the engine!" growled Wharton, in a fierce undertone.

Now Ben did not know what the engine meant, but he had a horrible suspicion that it was the mouth of the

monster which belched forth fire and brimstone; so he subsided into absolute silence, which lasted until the end of his fearful journey.

It was still early in the morning when the train slowed up and slid into the Baltimore depot. The day was dark with clouds and drizzling rain. Wharton signaled a hack, entered it, followed by Ben, and directed the driver to go to the foot of Fell Street. When the hack started Ben was so glad to be safely out of the clutches of the fire-and-brimstone-breathing beast that he smiled from one big ear to the other, displaying a fine row of ivories, and trying to be conciliating as he said:

"I nebber yode in a real city ca'age in all my life befo'. An' I feels mouty pee-oud, Marse Wharton!"

"Hold your jaw, can't you?" was the amiable response.

The boy was again snubbed into silence.

When they reached the foot of Fell Street Wharton paid and dismissed the hack, and, followed by Ben, entered a low saloon, where he called for breakfast for himself and Ben. Wharton was accommodated at a small pine table in the dingy dining room, and the darky was sent to the kitchen. When Wharton had finished his morning meal he called up Ben, who had not half finished his, and walked, attended by the negro, down to the wharfs to look for a certain vessel that he knew must be at her landing place about this time.

Yes! The *Wanderer,* Paul Wallo, master, was at her wharf. The *Wanderer* was a craft which, both as to her build and rig, and business, has gone rather out of fashion. She was a brig, of which the captain was principal owner. In the terms of this day, she would be called an "ocean tramp," for she had no regular ports. She traded between the United States, West Indies and Europe; receiving or delivering her cargo, and recruiting her crew wherever she could. She was now bound for Havana direct, with a miscellaneous cargo of cotton goods, hardware and pottery. Her crew was as mixed as her cargo. It was made up of Americans and Englishmen, who could speak a little broken Spanish; Spaniards and Portuguese, who could manage to make themselves half intelligible in fractured English; and West Indian creoles and negroes.

who spoke a jargon of both tongues. So the deck of the brig was a Tower of Babel at times.

Wharton boarded the *Wanderer,* followed by the young negro, who, growing more and more doubtful and anxious, as they stepped on the deck, dared to ask:

"Marse Wharton, sah, is my new mas'er aboa'd dis yere ship, sah?'

"Yes, you donkey, of course he is; or, if he is not, he will be soon. He is going on a voyage, and means to take you along with him."

"He tole me how he were goin' fo' ter cawy me home ter Servy, sah," said Ben, uneasily.

"Well, so he is, you big bull calf. He is going home by water, like we came to Washington by water."

"Oh, yes, marse; but," said the boy, as his color paled as much as it could, "is yo' gwine 'long o' we, too?"

"Of course I am!"

"Oh, Lor'! Oh, my Lor'! my Lor'!" groaned the negro, wringing his hands. But before the angry trader could demand an explanation of this emotion the captain of the brig came forward to meet his visitor.

Poor Ben slunk out of sight, squatted down on the deck and buried his face in his hands, muttering:

"Jonah 'boa'd ag'in! Jonah 'boa'd ag'in! De wessel's good as gone!"

Meanwhile, the captain of the brig joined Wharton. Capt. Wallo was of Spanish-American birth, supposed to have been originally of New Orleans. He was a tall, dark, swarthy, iron-gray-bearded man, about fifty years of age. His dark blue sailor dress was rather shabby, and the gilt band on his cap was tarnished.

"How are you, Wharton? What can I do for you today? Or what can you do for me? Which is it?" he curtly demanded, without removing his hands, which were deeply buried in his trousers pockets.

"Not much on either hand. I am going to Havana, if you can take me. I have a nigger boy with me and would like to have him work his passage," answered the trader.

"Certainly. That's all right, if you mean that young giant there!" exclaimed the skipper, laughing.

"Yes, I mean him."

"A big boy. I would like a few more of that size."

"When do you sail?" inquired Wharton, anxiously.

"With the first tide to-morrow; so you will have to be ready."

"I shall be ready. When you have unloaded at Havana, where next?"

"How do I know? It depends on what kind of a cargo I take aboard. I may come straight back here. I may sail for Liverpool, Havre, or some German port."

"H'm!' grunted Wharton, looking down, thoughtfully.

"If you have any freight you must see to getting it aboard this morning."

"I have nothing but that carpetbag in the boy's hand," replied Wharton, who would have liked to go to his boarding house in the city to get some of his effects, but did not dare to run the risk of being arrested by an officer on his track. Observing that the skipper looked surprised, he hastened to add: "I need nothing more for the voyage, and I do not mean to make any stay on the island. So now, captain, you may put that nigger to work as soon as you please. It will keep him from making a fool of himself about the sweetheart he left behind. If he shirks, I give you leave to set the cat on him," added Wharton, with an ugly laugh.

"All right," said Capt. Wallo. And the men parted company—the skipper to resume his duties, and the trader to skulk about the ship in obscure places.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE FATE OF A JONAH.

The *Wanderer* sailed on the first flood tide the next morning. Wharton was the only passenger, and was accompanied with a berth in the little cabin occupied by the skipper and the mate, and with a seat at their table, which was always laid for meals in the same cabin. In this fine, September weather Wharton spent the whole day and a greater part of the night on deck, in a half-intoxicated state, for he had been drinking deeply since his flight from Washington. Ben had a bunk in the for

castle, and messed with the colored seamen. He worked hard and willingly all day, and became a favorite of the sailors.

But Ben was puzzled, suspicious, distressed. Where was his new master? He had not seen a sign of him since he came on board, and he could not question Wharton, who kept entirely out of his way. Why? Ben brooded, and out of his brooding came a suspicion that slowly grew into a certainty. It was by no process of ratiocination that the young giant's nebulous doubts crystallized into conviction. He was incapable of reasoning, but he was just as sure that Wharton had run away from the police, and had entrapped him into coming quietly, as if he had mentally reasoned the whole matter out. But what for? For selling a white child! That fact flashed upon him with sudden conviction.

"Oh, Jonah! Jonah!" he cried, dropping the holystone with which he was cleaning the deck. "Oh, Jonah! Jonah! 'boa'd de wessel, an' de wessel's good as gone!"

"Vod ees zee madder vees you, Snowball?" inquired a little, dark, Spanish sailor, who was near the foremast, busy with the rigging.

"Jonah! Jonah! Jonah's on de wessel, an' de wessel's good as gone!" cried Ben.

"Zjonah? Vot ees Zjonah, zen?" inquired the little Spaniard.

But before Ben could explain, the firm footstep and peremptory voice of the mate was heard approaching.

"Look alive, there, my lads!" And this put an end to the brief conversation for the time being; but after that Ben was frequently heard to bewail the baleful mystery he called "Jonah."

It was a stormy season of the year. Equinoctial gales might reasonably be expected, therefore no special interposition of the avenging fates was needed to bring on the sudden squalls, head winds, twisters and other eccentricities of wind, wave and weather that beset the voyage of the *Wanderer*. But Ben always shook his woolly head in the most ominous manner, as he muttered under his breath, "Jonah!"

Off Cape Hatteras the brig encountered a hurricane. The skipper, who was careful as well as bold, was pre-

pared for it. He kept his "weather eye" open, and watched the barometer carefully. When he saw the mercury begin to rapidly fall, he trimmed the ship, and carried only sail enough to steady her so that she would obey her helm.

One night, during a lull in the storm that had been battering the brig for nearly two days, the sailors off duty were assembled in the forecastle, spinning yarns and singing songs. During applause in the singing and story-telling, Jose, the Spaniard, said to Ben:

"Gome, now zen, Snowball, dell uz vot do you mean by zee Zjonah?"

"Yeez, py tamn! Who eez zee Zhonah, oon boa'd deez zhipe, vot mages ze gales to blew?" demanded the little, dark Portuguese, whose name was Diego.

"Yes! Who is he, Snowball?" inquired Bill Jones, the Englishman.

"Come, tell the yarn," said a third.

"No, sing us a song. You black snowballs are as full of songs as a bladder is of wind," said a fourth.

"D—— songs! Spin us a yarn!"

"To the devil with yarns! Sing us a song!"

"I'se do bof, gemplemen," said Ben, conciliatingly.

"Fire away, then!" said the chorus.

"I'll sing yer de song ob 'Marse Jonah an' de W'ale,' as my po' mammy wot is gon' ter glory tell it ter me, an' as Servy"—here poor Ben broke down and cried a little, but soon recovered himself and continued: "As Servy readed it ter me outen ole misses' big Bible!"

The negroes, even the stupid ones, have all some gift of improvisation. Ben began and sung the following doggerel:

BEN'S SONG.

"Marse Jonah, him wer' moughty bad!
Eben w'en a yittle lad!
Wouldn't mine his mammy's word,
Nor his daddy's, nor his Lord!
Den he yunned away ter sea,
An' de farm wer' yid ob he.
But jis' as soon's he stepped aboa'd
Sich storms ariz! Oh, Lord! oh, Lord!
De t'under yolled wid might an' main!
Up yoared de win', doun poured de rain!

'It's Jonah's sins,' de sailors swored,
An' den dey hev him oberboa'd.
An' f'om de sea upriz a whale
An' swallered Jonah, head an' tail!
An' den de win' fell saft as silk,
An' de sea as mild as mammy's milk!
An' dis de moral I would teach,
We mus'n't keep on boa'd no sich
Wot on de sea would fetch a storm,
An' do us all a mortal harm!"

"Bravo! Bully for you! Bully boy!" cried a chorus of seamen, clapping their hands.

"But who is this Jonah on board this ship, Snowball? Give us a name!" cried the Englishman.

"Gemplemen!" said Ben, solemnly; "I has sung yer a song 'bout de fuss Jonah, as my mammy telled me 'bout, an' Servy read 'bout. Now I'll tell yer a true sto'y 'bout de Jonah on dis wessel."

"Go on! Go on!" cried the sailors, in a chorus.

"Gemplemen, yer hears dat win' a-roarin' an' a-roarin' like a lion, doane yer?"

"Yes!" cried the chorus.

"An' yer see de wile wav's a-risin' an' leapin' like sharks, longin' ter swaller de ship, doane yer?"

"Yes! Yes!" they all cried.

"An' yer feels de snip unnerneaf ob yer a-wallerin' an' a-wallerin' like it wer' tryin' ter spill yer outen de sea, doane yer?"

"Yes! Yes! Yes!"

"Well, gemplemen, neder de win's nor de waves, nor de ship, aine got no grudge ag'in yer, gemplemen! Wot dey wants ter git yid ob is Jonah! An' dey gwine ter git yid ob Jonah, ef dey has ter 'stroy de ship! Mine, I tell yer the gospel truth!"

"Yes, but who is Jonah? Who is Jonah?" demanded the men.

"Gemplemen, I'se gwine ter tell yer 'bout he. Gemplemen, I sailed on a steamboat 'long o' dis Jonah not more'n a mont' ago. An' de boat were wrecked! Yes, sah, wrecked all ter smash, 'case dis same Jonah were abo'd ob her! Yes, gemplemen, an' eberybody jounded 'cep' 'twer Jonah hissef! De debbil tuk care ob he. An' dis

bressed wessel good as gone now, wid dis yere Jonah aboa'd ob her! Yes, sah!"

"But who the devil is he, nigger?" impatiently demanded the American sailor who was present.

"He's de berry wickedest, cussedest, 'fernalist willian as ebber drawed de bref ob life! Now I tell yer wot he's name is, an' wot he done. W'ich his name it is Wharton!"

"What! The cabin passenger?" demanded the Englishman.

"Dat berry same! An' now I jes tell yer w'at he done!" said Ben.

"Spin us the whole yarn!" all demanded.

Ben told his story of the cruel sale at the Godfrey farm, and of the heartrending parting with friends; the voyage of the *Errand Girl*, the storm, the wreck of the steamer, the rescue of himself, Wharton, Servia and the little Spanish child, saved by Servia; the slave pen at Washington, and the sale of Servia, with that of the child, as mother and daughter; and, finally, the deception by which he himself was entrapped, and drawn quietly on board the *Wanderer*.

"An' sure's yer born," he said, in conclusion, "de wessel's doomed to dest'uction wid dat Jonah aboa'd!"

While he was telling the story the roar of the winds and waves played a fearful accompaniment. The gale was rising in force and fury.

Sailors are proverbially superstitious. And now that the terrible tale was all told—now that the howling of the wind, the roaring of the sea, and the tossing of the ship increased with every moment—deep, fierce whisperings were exchanged between the men.

They were, however, interrupted by three sharp knocks overhead, and the voice of the mate shouting:

"All hands, ahoy!"

The men tumbled up and rushed on the deck. The ship rocked, tossed, rolled and pitched, with wave after wave dashing over her bows, so that none but the most practiced seamen could keep their footing on deck.

The halyards of the fore topgallant sail became so entangled that the sail could not be shortened.

"Aloft and cut away the fo' t'galn's'l!" commanded the mate.

Ben understood the command, and rushed up the fore rigging with the agility of a monkey. His training in climbing trees in coon hunts stood him in good stead now.

"Yes! You do that! We'll attend to the rest!" hissed the voice of the Englishman, as Ben scrambled up the rigging into the darkness above.

"Keep below, Wharton! You are not in a condition to come on deck in such weather!" the voice of the captain was heard to call to his passenger, who came staggering up from the cabin.

Apparently no attention was paid to this advice by the trader, who went reeling along the deck, catching at the rigging here and there to save himself from falling.

And now came the sudden, swift and awful retribution! It was in this way: All that could be done to save the ship had been done. Ben had succeeded in cutting away the fore topgallant sail; all the other sails were close reefed, and the ship was made snug and trim, with the skipper at the wheel. The *Wanderer* had been driven swiftly before the gale. There was a pause of awful expectation. Should the wind shift suddenly, the chances of the ship were small.

A group of sailors were standing near amidships, with their heads bent down together, muttering in low, threatening tones. Ben was not among them. He had just slid down from his perilous duty, and was recovering his foothold.

The men became more and more excited. An intense, but suppressed, fury was betrayed in every tone, glance and motion.

"T'other craft was lost, and he aboard, mind you, lads!" hoarsely whispered one.

"But he was saved! The devil took care of his own!" malignantly growled another.

"Let the devil save him this time! He must go! He must go!" hissed a third.

"Only way to save the ship, lads!" muttered a fourth.

"Mum! Here he comes! Now, no shirking! All together, and all over in a minute! Hish! Look alive, and make no noise!" whispered the Briton.

Wharton, the doomed, but unconscious, victim of sailor superstition and savage retribution, came sauntering and staggering along toward the group of half-maddened men.

"Now!" muttered the Briton, in fierce, guttural tones.

"Zjonah!" hissed the Spaniard, between his clinched teeth.

"Child stealer!" mocked the Yankee.

They gathered around him with dark, scowling looks. Wharton dropped the pipe from his mouth, and stared at them in a sudden panic of terror and amazement. They closed on him. They seized him.

"What the devil do you mean?" he shrieked. "Help! Murder!"

But the howling of the blast drowned his voice, as with one great, swaying heave they lifted him, still shrieking for help, and struggling for life, and crying for mercy, and threw him headlong into the roaring hell of waters below.

This deed of savage vengeance and sailors' superstition was the wild impulse and action of a crisis. It was over in an instant.

When the sailors came to their senses, and looked at each other in more of dismay than triumph, they were startled by the voice of the mate, who was hurrying toward them.

"What the deuce is all this row?"

"Man overboard, sir," answered the Briton.

"The devil! Who is it?" demanded the mate, in consternation, for he knew the case was hopeless with the ship in such a sea as that.

"The devil it is," muttered several of the men under their breath.

"It is the passenger, sir!" replied the Englishman. "'Fraid he was drunk, sir!"

"Poor wretch! I heard the captain warn him!" said the mate.

Ben had come running up during the colloquy, and heard the few last words that told him the victim was the treacherous trader. In an instant his jacket was off, in another his waistcoat followed, and in a third he would have cast himself into the boiling sea had not the men laid hold of him and held him fast. And it took all their

united strength to do it, for Ben struggled with all his might to free himself and leap into the sea to save his owner.

Yes! Ben, the poor slave, the "idiot," the "big baby," as he was contemptuously called, the giant who blubbered like a child at being torn from home and friends—Ben would have risked his life then to save his tyrant!

"What are you after, you infernal black lubber? Stop that!" ordered the mate.

"Lor' A'mighty, marse! I can't let a man drown 'out tryin' ter help 'im!"

"You can't help him!"

"I kin swim, marse!' pleaded the negro.

"You lubber! a lifeboat couldn't float in such a sea. Besides, the man is dead and half a mile astern by this time," said the mate, who could not help admiring Ben's heroism, though he ascribed it partly to his ignorance of certain death in such a desperate venture.

Ben sighed and ceased to struggle. He had never intended, with all his song singing and yarn spinning, to tempt the sailors to throw "Jonah" overboard, nor did he now even suspect that they had done so. He thought the catastrophe to be a fatal accident.

Strange coincidence! Within a short time the wind fell to a mild and favorable breeze. The storm, with its danger, was over; and with full sail and a favorable wind the *Wanderer* continued on a prosperous voyage.

Nothing thenceforth could convince the sailors who had offered up a victim, that the sacrifice of the wicked trader had not appeased the storm spirit and saved the ship. And many a time, in after years, in the forecastles of other ships, and in midnight watches on deck, was the story told of how the *Wanderer* was pursued by storms, and nearly wrecked, through having a Jonah on board, and how she was only saved by throwing Jonah into the sea.

CHAPTER XVII.

OLIVER.

His waggish face, that speaks a soul jocose,
Seems molded in the cast of fun and glee;
And on the bridge of his well-arched nose,
Sits laughter plumed and white-winged jollity.
—TENNENT.

It was after nine o'clock at night when the train that carried Col. Pryor slowed up into the little wayside station of Halfdown and stopped.

He was the only passenger for that place. He got off, and the train passed on, whirling out of sight and hearing. The colonel stood alone on the platform. The one porter had disappeared, his duties being over for the night. The ticket agent had not once shown himself; his duties being ended, he was probably engaged in making up his bunk, preparatory to going to bed.

The genial colonel was in a quandary. In the hurry and worry of his short sojourn in Washington, he had forgotten to notify his people of the train by which he should return, so that they might send a buggy to meet him. There never was by chance a hack for hire at this little, obscure station. And the nearest inn was at Mistyrock, six miles away. The colonel's prospects now seemed dismal enough. He must arouse the agent who slept at the station, and ask the privilege of sitting up all night in the waiting room, and in the morning he must walk six miles to Mistyrock to hire the one public hack the place boasted of.

Well, he could do that, he thought. In the meantime, the night was so fine, the mountain air so fresh, he preferred to promenade the platform, and stretch his legs before disturbing the agent. Pacing up and down, the colonel looked about him.

A brilliant, blue-black, starlit sky gleamed over the pine-clad hills around. After the thunder of the passing train, the stillness and solitude seemed awful. As the colonel glanced about, he heard a soft "Gee up!" and saw emerge from a deep, wooded hollow between two hills, a horse

and buggy, driven by a boy about twelve years of age. When they drew near, and within the range of the solitary light of the station, he recognized his own shabby, old buggy, his young, white horse, Ipse Dixit, and his twelve-year-old son, Oliver. He drew a breath of relief and thankfulness.

"Hello, Noll!" he said, going to meet him.

"Hello, young marse!" responded the boy, drawing up and springing from the buggy.

"You young rascal!" cried the colonel; "how many times have I told you not to address me in that absurd manner "

"Never called you anything else since I first learned to talk, dad, and I'm too old to change now," said the boy. "But, jump in, dad, and let's get away from here before the express passes. It doesn't stop here, but it is due in a few minutes, and if Ipse Dixit should hear it coming, he will run away, and kick the buggy to smash and break our necks. Indeed, he told me he would."

The colonel got into the buggy, followed by Oliver, who took the reins and turned the horse's head away from the railroad, and drove into the turnpike that crossed it and led to Mistyrock.

"Ipse Dixit is a fine colt, but he's a little too stubborn and self-conceited. He swears that no one shall ever fool or bully him again into coming into sight or hearing of the infernal railway train. I brought him here yesterday for the first time, not knowing his objections. But as soon as he heard the train coming he ran away, threw me out, and kicked the dogcart into kindling wood!"

"Threw you out, Noll!" exclaimed the colonel, in dismay.

"Oh, he didn't hurt me. He landed me in a pool of water. I was only wet. I was able to pick myself up and walk back to the station to see if you had arrived by that train. Of course, you hadn't, young marse. After the train had gone on again, the porter helped me to catch the colt, and loaned me a saddle and bridle, and so I got home safe!"

"My good Noll, how thoughtful in you to come to meet me. And I forgot to write," said the colonel.

"Of course you did, young marse. You always forget

when you yourself are concerned. But never mind, dear, old boy! You have me to look after you. Well, the old dogcart's gone beyond repair; so when I harnessed Ipse Dixit to the buggy this afternoon, I solemnly promised him to bring him no nearer to the station than the deep grove, and keep him safe there until the monster had come and gone! That's the reason you did not find me waiting, dad.'

They were now driving along a fairly good turnpike road, cut through a deep, narrow rut, through a thick, pine forest that covered the hills rising on either side.

"All well at home, Noll?" inquired the colonel.

"'Live and kicking," replied the boy.

"Have you seen anyone from Horah Hall?"

"Old Si has been here."

"Did he bring any news or message from—from——"

"My stepmother-in-law to be? No, young marse, he didn't."

"Noll! don't speak in a frivolous tone of that lady, my son," said the colonel, with gravity.

"All right, dad! But talking of sons reminds me of something I had to propose.'

"Well, what is it, Noll?"

"Let us give Ipse Dixit to young Murdok Horah. They'd suit each other to a T."

Nat Pryor burst into a roar of laughter. It took but little to excite his sense of humor.

"It would be a 'pull Dick, pull devil,' between them, certainly, my boy. One of them would kill the other within the year, that's sure. But, hush, Noll! We must not jest so about him. He is the only son of his mother, and she is a widow, you know, my boy."

"Well, and I am the only son of my father, and he's a widower!" declared the irrepressible Noll.

"I wish he was as much of a comfort to his good mother as you are to your old dad, my boy," said the colonel, very gravely.

"Now, young marse!" exclaimed Oliver, deprecatingly.

But here Ipse Dixit began to see ghosts in the dark road before him, and refused to go forward. The colonel took the reins from the boy's hands, and soon reduced the ani-

mal to obedience, and they passed the haunted spot and went on.

It was about half-past ten when they reached the tavern in Mistyrock. The house was not closed. All the lights were burning, and the servants indoors and outside seemed on the alert.

"Put the colt up, Peter, and give him a good rub down and feed," said the colonel, as he got out of the buggy and threw the reins to the hostler.

"We go no further to-night, Noll," he said, as he entered the house, followed by his son.

They were shown into a small parlor, with bare floor almost as white and smooth as ivory, bare, whitewashed walls, decorated with cheap colored prints, illustrating scenes in the Revolutionary War, and the portrait of Gen. Washington hung over the mantel. A mass of evergreen pine firs filled the fireplace, and scented the room. A round walnut table and a few walnut chairs, with a rocker, completed the furniture.

Oliver drew the rocker up to the table, and the colonel sank into it, and gave the waiter who attended them an order for their supper to be served there. When the man had left the room, Oliver drew a chair to the table, and seated himself opposite his father.

The light from the hanging lamp over their heads shone down upon as fine a lad as could be found in the whole country. Not that he was so handsome, but he was tall, stout and well grown for his twelve years. His rather large, but shapely, head was covered with a thick mass of fine, curly, red hair, that grew back from his broad, full forehead and temples, giving his countenance a singularly frank and open character. His features were massive, but regular. His eyes were blue, fringed with long eyelashes, and arched with eyebrows a little darker than his hair. His mouth was large, but perfectly formed, with a sweet expression, which, together with his open brow and frank, blue eyes gave a winning charm to his face. His complexion was fair, but somewhat freckled.

He wore a suit of blue tweed and a straw hat, which he had now thrown on the floor.

Before any conversation could be carried further be-

tween father and son, two negro waiters entered the room, one with a tablecloth, which he proceeded to lay, and another with a tray containing the supper, which he arranged upon the table.

Both father and son were hearty feeders, and they soon made a good meal. When they had finished, the colonel asked to be shown to the room that had been prepared for himself and his son. It was late when they went to bed, but they made up for lost time by sleeping soundly, until the movements about the house awakened them in the morning.

They took an early breakfast, had the horse hitched to the buggy, and started for home. It was a rough drive along a tortuous road, zigzagging, rather than winding, among the deep ravines, down to the dell called "The Notches," from the peculiar nature of the rocks surrounding it.

As soon as the colonel delivered the reins to the groom who came to take them, he said:

"Put up Ipse Dixit and harness the brown horse to the buggy, Tim, and look sharp about it! I am going to drive over to Horah Hall."

The man led Ipse Dixit away, and soon returned with the relieving animal. Col. Pryor never left the piazza, but walked up and down until the buggy was ready. Then, with the agility of a young man, he jumped in and drove away.

"Funny," murmured Oliver to himself. "Dad's been courting that widow ever since I can remember, but he doesn't seem any nearer getting her now than when he first began! Poor dad! Went to Washington on her business, too. I wonder what it was for? Dad didn't tell me, and I didn't ask him. He don't like to be questioned where she is concerned. Not he! Poor, young marse."

Oliver's habit of calling his father "young marse" was not a jest, nor yet a caprice. The poor boy lost his mother when he was but a few months old, and had been nursed by a strong, healthy, colored woman on the farm, who always addressed her master as "young marse."

There had been an "old marse" years before, but he was dead. There was no white person about the house

except the widowed father and his motherless son. All the negroes on the place called the man "young marse," and the child "little marse." And so the baby boy knew no other name for his father except "dad," as the colonel called himself when he would say to the child, "Come to poor dad." At first the trick amused the father, and he would roar with laughter at hearing himself called "young marse" by his infant son. But as the boy grew older the man grew more ashamed of the absurdity than amused at the humor of the appellation, and tried in vain to break the boy of it. But the habit seemed too deeply rooted to be eradicated.

Col. Pryor, with his fresh horse, drove along the rugged road, zigzagging as before, in and out among the rocky heights and wild woods, and finally down into the deep dale in which Horah Hall, shrouded in its old trees, was situated.

As he drove through the neglected grounds he solemnly shook his head, muttering to himself:

"The place wants a master, that it does! Even as poor a master as Nat Pryor would be better than none at all."

As he passed through the tangled thicket of untrimmed trees and straggling undergrowth, and entered the open space just before the house, he came upon Old Si, who was engaged in lazily raking up the fallen leaves and singing to himself:

"I wahn to go wey Ma'y's gwine,
P'avin' on de golden harp,
Eatin' cake an' jinkin' wine,
P'ayin' on de golden harp!"

"Good-morning, Josias," said the colonel, laughing.

The negro started and dropped his rake.

"My Lor' A'mighty, marse, how yer scared me! Comin' on a body yike de day of judgment!"

"If it had been that awful day, and I had been the angel with the trumpet, I should have found you well prepared, Josias. Raking leaves and singing hymns," laughed the visitor.

"Yes, bress de Lor', marster, I hopes dat's so," said the negro, with edifying self-complacency.

"But is that your notion of the joys of the blessed in heaven, Josias?"

"Wot, marser?"

"'Eating cake and drinking wine,'"

quoted the colonel, still laughing.

"Ob co'se it is, sah! Settin' down ter de table 'long ob Moses, an' David, an' Job, an' de oder 'posles! 'cordin' to de Scripter."

Self-convicted of the irreverence in laughing at the negro's simple faith, the colonel checked the mirth that was bubbling up in his breast and gravely inquired:

"How's your mistress?"

"Berry well, I t'anks yer, marse colonel! Powerful well ebber sence she hab dat yittle gal ob Serby's to play 'long ob! Youn' mist'ess jess like a chile 'long ob a doll baby! Aine yer gwine inter de house, marse colonel? Youn' mist'ess got nobody but de yittle gal 'long ob her dis mornin'," said the negro, persuasively.

"Of course I am going in. Here, look after my horse and buggy. Where is the boy?" inquired the colonel, as he jumped out and gave the reins to Si.

"Marse Murdok gone 'way sumwhuze wid his gun to shoot birds. Lor'! how dat boy do lub ter kill fings! H'm!" groaned Si. "W'y, he do kill just fer de fun ob killin'! Killin' fings fer nuffin' 'tall! Fings as doane do no harm, an' fings w'at aine good to eat! Taine no use ter say nuffin' ter 'im, nudder! Tudder day I tell 'im ter 'member who seed de sparrows fall."

"What did he say?" inquired the colonel.

"Fotch me a clip ober de top ob my head wid his gun dat would hab sont me ter glory ef I hadn't a strong head ob my own. Wid de butt ob his gun he did it!"

Impulsive Nat Pryor now suddenly remembered that he was committing another misdemeanor by encouraging the servant to talk disparagingly of his young master, so he said, abruptly:

"Take the animal to the stable, Si," and then he hurried up the steps leading to the front door and sounded an alarm on the cast-iron lion's head.

The door was opened by Brush, who bowed and made

way for the visitor to enter. Col. Pryor walked into the hall and sat down in one of the oaken chairs, saying:

"How are you, my man? Give my compliments to your mistress, and say that I would like to pay my respects to her in person if she should be disengaged."

"Yes, sah. Woane yer go inter de parlor, sah?"

"I won't stir, if you please, until you give my message to your mistress," said the colonel, taking off his hat, and drawing out his pocket handkerchief to wipe his face. Fatigue was beginning to tell on even stout Nat Pryor.

The negro hurried away, and soon returned with his mistress' compliments, and a request that Col. Pryor would walk into her sitting room.

Nat Pryor rose and went down the dark hall, preceded by the negro, who opened the last door on the left hand, bowed and retired.

The visitor entered the gloomy back parlor, with its dark, wainscoted walls, its dull, crimson window curtains, and its somber, black walnut furniture.

In the right-hand corner of the opposite end of the room, just where the parted breadths of the murky, red window curtains let in a ray of light, sat the widow and the child—Isabel Horah, still in her mourning, in a high-back chair, uncomfortable enough to be penitential, engaged in knitting—no pretty fancywork—but a stocking.

In a child's chair at her feet sat the little Zenobia. The one stream of light fell directly on her bright form. It needed but a glance at the group to see that Old Si was right in his story that the sad widow delighted in the Spanish infant as a child delights in a doll. The beautiful, dark, little creature was artistically and harmoniously dressed, all in one color that suited her. She wore a slip of rich crimson cashmere, bound around the waist with a broad sash of the same hue. A narrow ribbon of the same color twined in and out among the glossy, black curls of her lovely little head. Black silk hose and tiny crimson boots completed her dress. She glowed like some richly plumaged bird of the tropics in the stream of light from the window. All around her, on the polished oak floor, were strewed her toys—dolls, birds, picture books, et cetera.

Nat Pryor took in the whole scene at a glance.

The tiny lady was the first to notice the visitor. She laid down the doll she had been nursing as tenderly as if it were her child, rose, bowed her little head with exquisite grace, and said:

"Buenos dias, mi señor."

"Good-morning, my beauty! How do you do?" responded the hearty colonel, stooping to kiss her. But she drew a little back, and gave him her hand instead of her lips, saying:

"Gracias, mi señor!"

"I said she was a princess! She gives me her hand to kiss like a queen!" laughed Nat Pryor, instantly recovering himself to bow to Mrs. Horah, who had risen to receive him.

"Good-morning, madam. I hope I find you well," said the colonel, offering his hand.

"As usual, thank you," she answered, coolly, and only touching the tips of his fingers. For Isabel Horah seemed to think it necessary to keep her silent suitor at some distance; more especially after she had received services from him.

"Pray be seated, Col. Pryor," she said, indicating a chair.

He dropped into it, feeling, poor fellow, as if a douche of ice-cold water had been thrown over him. For a time he was speechless.

"You have taken a great deal of trouble on this poor child's account, and I thank you in her name."

"Don't mention it, dear madam. I would have taken much more for"—you he was about to say, but she would not allow him to go further.

"May I inquire what success you have had?" she hastened to ask.

"Not much, madam, I am sorry to say. The scoundrel—I beg your pardon—Wharton has fled. The police are after him. Whether they will catch him or not is another question. He has probably left the country. However, I have offered a reward for his apprehension."

"And concerning the child?"

"I have ascertained that she is undoubtedly the daughter of Señor Lorenzo and the Señora Dolores de Leon, of Cadiz, Spain, passengers on board the *Errand Girl,* and

who were lost in the wreck of that steamer. I have caused advertisements to be inserted in the principal newspapers in the large cities in the country, addressed to the orphan's nearest of kin, or next friend; describing her by name, personal appearance and probable age, with the story of the rescue."

"I thank you, sir. That is all, I presume, that can be done at present. And we must have patience. But the tutor you were so obliging as to say that you would endeavor to find for my son?"

"I am very sorry to say that I have not been able to find one as yet; but I inserted an advertisement in two newspapers for such a one as I hoped might suit you, and gave the address of the post office, Mistyrock."

"I thank you again, Col. Pryor. You lay me under many obligations. May Heaven reward you, for I never can," said Isabel Horah. The words were earnest, but the tone was cold, and, as a whole, her answer meant to convey more than met the ear.

The hapless suitor understood her, and sighed forth his answer.

"To serve you is the greatest, if not the only, happiness of my life, Mrs. Horah. I beg that you will give me that happiness as often as you can." With these words he rose to take leave. He had hoped that she would invite him to dinner. And she would have done so, but she was afraid.

It was a curious relation, theirs. Nat Pryor was, or seemed to be, her brother, friend and counselor, all in one. And he seemed to take great pleasure in holding this relation toward her. But he wanted to marry her, and she was afraid he might do so some day.

"Good-morning, Mrs. Horah," he said, offering his hand.

"Good-morning, and thank you again, Col. Pryor," she replied, just touching his fingers.

"By-by, baby!" he said, to the little señorita.

"Adios, mi señor," she answered, bowing and giving her hand with her sweet, infantile grace.

Col. Pryor left the house, and drove home, half angry with his fair, cold neighbor.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ZENOBIA, THE UNKNOWN.

Know well my soul, God's hand controls
  Whate'er thou fearest;
Round Him in calmest music rolls
  Whate'er thou hearest.

What to thee is shadow, to Him is day,
  And the end He knoweth;
And not on a blind and aimless way
  Thy spirit goeth.—WHITTIER.

The advertisement for a tutor for young Murdok Horah had been answered by about a dozen applicants; most of them, as usual, graduates of Northern colleges. But one of them was a middle-aged Scotchman, an M. A., who had been a public schoolmaster in Washington, but who, on account of his failing health, desired lighter duties and a change of scene.

"Now we have found the right sort of a man for the young gentleman," said Col. Pryor, when he was, as usual, consulted by Mrs. Horah. "None of your young chaps, who, not having learned to control themselves, cannot control the boy, of course, or command respect or confidence. No, indeed, but a man of middle age, grave, scholarly and experienced, as I judge this man to be by his letter. I advise you, by all means, to engage Mr. Alexander McKaul—though if he leaves the charge of a large public school, with the idea of finding it lighter work to look after the education of this young ruffian, I think he will find himself very much mistaken, and will wish himself back with all his heart," he added, mentally.

Of course, Isabel Horah took her neighbor's advice, and engaged the Scotchman.

In due time he arrived at Horah Hall. A tall, gaunt, red-haired Highlander, with bald crown, side whiskers, high nose, high cheek bones, strong chin, resolute lips and keen, light blue eyes. Evidently one who would stand no nonsense from man, woman or child.

Mrs. Horah received him politely, but with many misgivings. Young Murdok greeted him sulkily, and made

up his mind that "the beggarly Scotchman" was the most objectionable of all the tutors he had had, and had driven away, and that there was likely to be a death struggle between them for the mastery. The only reason why the young rebel did not at once repel the new teacher and insist upon his being sent away, was that he anticipated so much "fun" in opposing and tormenting the tutor, well knowing that the rebellion would be sustained by his mother.

So Mr. McKaul was duly installed in the schoolroom, and Murdok resumed his lessons. But, as may be readily supposed, Mr. Alexander McKaul did not remain long at Horah Hall. His engagement ended in a domestic cyclone. The way of it was this:

In a high altercation between master and pupil, the latter suddenly threw an inkstand at the head of the former, which just missed laying open his scalp. Whereupon the stalwart Scotchman seized the young ruffian, and then and there gave him the first "discipline" that "Murdok Horah s son" had ever received, in about as severe a thrashing as any schoolboy ever got.

The noise of the man's blows, and of the boy's roars and struggles, brought the mother and all the household running into the room. But not immediately did the descending shower of blows cease at the entrance of the horrified crowd. McKaul was too deeply interested and absorbed in his duty to notice the intruders until the cries of the mother to her servants reached his ears over the howling of the young culprit.

"Seize that madman! He will kill my son!" she screamed, running herself to the rescue.

Brush, Si, Delphy and Cindy fell upon the luckless Scotchman, and held him while young Murdok broke away, rushed from the room, and fled from the house, showing that his flesh only suffered, and that his bones were sound.

But Isabel Horah was beside herself, forgot that she was a gentlewoman, lost all self-control, and gave way to the fury that possessed her. Without deigning to ask any explanation, or to address a single word to the tutor, she said to her servants who held the man between them in such a vise that it seemed he could not struggle:

"Take that brute and cast him forth from the house! And if he doesn't leave the place instantly, set the dogs on him!" And without another word, but with a look of deadly hate and scorn, she swept from the room to go and look after her injured and outraged son.

The servants did not immediately obey their mistress' commands. Indeed, they secretly sympathized with the tutor, and thought the young miscreant had only got his deserts—his rights, indeed, out of which he had been kept too long already.

"Release me, ye doited fules!" said the Scotchman, falling back on his dialect as he sometimes did. "Release me! I am no that unweeling to go. I would na strive in a leddy's presence, but now, gin ye dinna loose me, I'll lay the four o' ye flat on your backs!" And suddenly he broke from them all, and stood at bay.

But it was only the surprise of the effort that made it successful.

"Marse teacher," said Si, as the oldest of the party, speaking for the rest, "Mist'ess' o'ders mus' be 'beyed. But we doane wahne ter be ha'sh, nor likewise dis'spec'ful. So ef yer'll le'me go wiv yer ter yer room I'll he'p yer ter pack yer fings, 'fo' yer go."

"Come along, then, if you are to be my jailer!" said the Scotchman.

"No, marse teacher, not dat! I kno's w'at's jue ter l'arnin' better'n dat! I'se yer 'bejunt servant ter command, sah," said Si, with one of his best bows.

Meanwhile, Isabel Horah had gone through all the lower rooms, searching for her boy, without finding him. She went out on the piazza, where she found Servia, with the little Zenobia.

"Have you seen Master Murdok?" she anxiously inquired.

"Yes, madam. He passed out here a few minutes ago and went around in the direction of Celia's cottage," replied the woman.

"Ah!" sighed Isabel Horah, with a jealous pang, for it occurred to her, not for the first time, that it was ever to Celia that the boy went for sympathy in his real or imaginary troubles. Ever to Celia, notwithstanding all the love, all the worship, she, his mother, lavished on him.

"It is hard!" she said to herself. "It is very hard! It is because the woman nursed him, I think. I do wish from the bottom of my heart I had never let her do it!" Feeling sure that Celia would do everything that she herself could do to comfort the sufferer's mind and body, and being too much hurt to follow him to his chosen refuge in the negro's hut, Isabel Horah reëntered the house to wait for his return.

It was late in the afternoon when he entered his mother's sitting room, threw down his cap and demanded:

"Is that beggar gone?"

"Yes, my dear, hours ago. Of course, he could not be permitted to remain here one moment after his outrageous conduct," she answered, soothingly.

"Was he hunted off the grounds by the dogs? Did they tear him? I wish they'd killed him! And now," he continued, without waiting to hear an answer to his question, "I tell you what, once for all! I am not going to have any more of these beggarly, sneaking, poor white trash, as Celia calls them, about me! I'll have a gentleman for my tutor, or I will have none at all! There are poor gentlemen in the world. Celia says there are. And I will have one for my teacher! I am master of Horah, I am! and not to be insulted and assaulted by the scum of the earth, and that I'll tell you!" he savagely exclaimed.

"Murdok, my dear, we will try to find such a gentleman as you desire, though it will be difficult to do so," said this fond and foolish mother, whose mistaken indulgence was preparing the ruin of her son.

Of course she could not advertise for a poor gentleman as tutor in so many words, but she would consult Col. Pryor. So, on the day succeeding the domestic storm, when Nat Pryor happened to call on her, she, as usual, laid her difficulty before him.

The good colonel was shocked, disappointed and quite discouraged by the summary dismissal of the Scotch tutor, and, for some minutes, could find nothing to say. At length an impulse to shift all future responsibility from his own shoulders led him to suggest:

"I would consult the rector, madam. Melville might make private inquiries among his *confrères* of the minis-

try, and discover among them the treasure you are in search of."

"It is an inspiration, Col. Pryor. I will act upon it immediately," said the widow, gratefully. And soon after the good neighbor took leave and went away.

* * * * * * *

Meantime, days passed into weeks, and weeks into months, and nothing was heard of the absconded trader, and no response came to the advertisements for the little Spaniard's next to kin. At length all hope from either quest was resigned, and the advertisements were withdrawn.

"I am not sorry, however, that that miscreant, Wharton, has never been apprehended and brought to trial, much as he deserves the severest punishment; nor am I sorry that no one has come forward to claim little Zenobia,' said Mrs. Horah to her old friend one morning, when he was paying one of his frequent visits.

"And why, my dear lady, after you have gone to so much trouble and expense in advertising?" inquired the colonel.

"You took all the trouble, colonel. It was our duty to make public quest, but I am not sorry—no, indeed! I am heartily glad that it came to nothing in both instances!"

"But, pardon me, why?"

"Because I have become very much attached to the little one, and I mean to adopt her and bring her up as my own daughter, which I could not do if any kindred came to claim her. And, under these circumstances, I do not wish the disgraceful story of Wharton's crime in selling her as a slave to come out, as it surely must have if the wretch had been apprehended and brought to trial."

"But, my dear madam, if that story was published through the whole length and breadth of the land, and told from the housetops, it could in no way injure the innocent little victim," said the colonel in surprise.

"I am not so sure as to that—in a community like this. Besides, of all the evils, I should deprecate the cruelty that the child herself should ever suffer by the humiliation of

learning the shame to which she had been subjected in being sold as a slave."

The colonel stroked his chin in a thoughtful manner, but said nothing. The widow continued:

"Our neighbors have not the slightest knowledge, or the faintest suspicion, of the real manner in which this child came under my charge. I cautioned Servia from the beginning to say nothing about it to any living soul. I know that she has obeyed me. The story of the heroic rescue of the little Spanish child by the brave colored girl has been made public property by the newspapers; but the story of the humiliating sale of that child as a slave is a profound secret, confined to you, myself, and Servia, whom I can implicitly trust. The secret must go no further. All that my neighbors have heard, and all they must ever know, is that the little Spanish child, rescued by the colored girl, has been ascertained to be of noble lineage, and has been adopted by me in default of her own kindred, and is to be brought up as my own daughter."

Nat Pryor made mental objection to the representation of the orphan as of "noble lineage," since nothing was positively known of the rank of Señor Don Lorenzo or his wife. But he said nothing.

"You understand me, now, I hope, Col. Pryor!"

"Assuredly, my dear lady. I understand and appreciate both your motives and your action. There is only one aspect of the affair, my dear lady——"

The colonel paused. Chosen counselor as he was, he always hesitated to enter a demurrer, however reasonable, to any plan proposed by the sovereign of his affections, that he had any reason to suspect might be unpleasant to her, however proper or necessary it might seem to him.

"What is that, sir?" she inquired.

"It is this, my dear lady. The little Spanish girl being orphaned, and of noble lineage, as you infer, may also be the heiress of large estates of which she ought not to lose the right of inheritance——"

"Castles in Spain!" interrupted the lady, with a slightly derisive smile.

"Yes, madam," replied the colonel, unconscious of any

sarcasm. "And lands! Therefore I thought that though we may withdraw the advertisement for kindred for the present——"

"After keeping them in the papers for months," interrupted the widow.

The colonel made a deprecating wave of his hand, and continued:

"It might be well in the interest of the child to reinsert the advertisements at intervals, say of from four to six months. What do you think yourself, madam?"

"I admit that it should be done on the slightest chance of gaining news of Zenobia's relatives, but I do not believe anything will come of it," replied Mrs. Horah.

"And her wish is father to the thought," mused the colonel; but he said nothing.

The lady again took up the thread of the conversation, saying:

"Now I wish you to take notice, Col. Pryor, that though I consent to the occasional repetitions of the advertisements for Zenobia's friends, I will have no more rewards offered for the apprehension of Wharton. I should much rather the miscreant should escape punishment, richly as he deserves the severest the outraged law can inflict, than that the humiliating fact of my pet's sale as a slave should become public."

"Of course your will is my law, dear madam," replied the colonel, with a polite bow. Under reserved protest he, however, added mentally—"For I cannot think you are right, angel as you are."

"And you understand, I hope, colonel?" she inquired, doubtfully, for she read his frank countenance more clearly than he thought.

"Well, not quite, dear madam," he answered, with a deprecating smile.

"In what particular?" she inquired, with some annoyance.

"I beg pardon. Only this: As you are so opposed to bringing the child stealer to justice, why did you offer a reward for his apprehension?"

"Why? Don't you see that 'circumstances alter cases'? When I offered that reward——"

"And displayed such a great desire to have the criminal brought to trial," interjected the colonel.

"The case was very different then. I confidently expected the friends of the orphan to come forward and claim her, and carry her off to Spain before her guilty abductor could be brought to trial, and so the dishonor of her sale would never be known to her, or to her friends. But as they have not come to claim her, and, in all probability, never will come, and as I have adopted her, and intend to bring her up in this neighborhood, I do not choose the shadow of that shame to rest upon her. Bah! Did I not tell you all this before?"

"Well, not clearly; or else I am very obtuse," said the colonel, with a smile. "But, to change the subject: I met Melville at Mistyrock yesterday, and he desired me to tell you that he had found a gentleman who he hoped might suit you as a teacher for your son, and that to-morrow the gentleman would wait upon you with a letter from himself."

"I am very glad to hear it. What is his name?"

"I do not know, but we will hear to-morrow," replied the colonel, as he rose to take his leave.

CHAPTER XIX.

GILBERT GODFREY.

The star of the unconquered will,
He rises in my breast,
Serene, and resolute, and still,
And calm, and self-possessed.—LONGFELLOW.

Early in the forenoon of the next day, as Mrs. Horah sat at the front window of her bedroom on the first floor, engaged in sewing, with the little Spaniard playing on the floor at her feet, and Servia employed in arranging the bureau drawers, she happened to look out and saw a young man coming up the walk toward the house.

"It is the new tutor, I suppose. Brush has gone to Mistyrock. Servia, you must go down and admit him, and say that I will see him in a few minutes."

"Yes, madam," the girl replied, leaving the room at once.

Before she reached the foot of the stairs she heard the knock, and hastened to open the door.

A young man of about twenty years of age, of medium height, fair complexion, light hair, blue eyes, large forehead and light mustache, stood at the threshold.

"Master Gilbert!"

"Servia!"

These were the first words that burst in astonishment from the lips of the two.

"Oh, Master Gilbert! Is this, indeed, you, yourself? Thank the Lord! Oh, thank the Lord that I see you once more!" exclaimed Servia, trembling with emotion that nearly overwhelmed her.

"Servia, my girl, I am very glad to see you! Looking so well, too! You must have a happy home here, judging by your countenance, when you first opened the door."

"Yes, Master Gilbert, thank the Lord, who 'tempers the wind to the shorn lamb,' I have a happy home and a good mistress. If it hadn't been so I should have died, I was so heartbroken at parting from everybody at my dear old home! But walk in, sir. The surprise and delight of seeing you made me forget good manners. This way, sir, if you please," said Servia, leading on to the back parlor —the obscure, wainscoted room, with its dark crimson window curtains, where the widow usually sat knitting all day long, and where all her counsels with Col. Pryor were held.

Servia drew aside the curtains and opened the shutters and let more light into the room than it was usually permitted to receive. Then she drew the old crimson rocking-chair forward for her former young master, and when he was seated, said:

"My mistress sent her compliments to you, sir, and says that she will come down to see you in a few minutes."

"All right, my good girl. I am not sorry to have a little time in which to ask you about yourself. Are you really happy and contented here?" inquired the young man, with earnest interest.

"As happy—yes—I may say happier than I could be

anywhere else away from the loved and lost," gravely replied the girl.

"Time will soften the sorrow for the dead and absent, Servia," said the young man, kindly.

"The Lord will, and He does, sir! The Lord! Whom my sainted mistress taught me to trust through good and ill," said Servia, reverently inclining her head.

"And time is one of His mediums, my girl. Servia, I have heard of your brave deed in saving that little Spanish child. Ah, my girl, what a noble deed that was! I cannot praise it too much, Servia. I should have been proud to have done such a deed."

"Oh, sir, I scarcely did it myself. It was so sudden, so impulsive, so mechanical; I hardly knew what I did, or had done, until I came to myself on board the *Carrier Dove,* and was told that I was picked up just as I was sinking, with the child clasped in my arms. I am sure it was the Lord that did that, sir, though I got the credit."

"Meek and modest as ever, Servia. But I really do think that the child's friends should have purchased your freedom, and have secured you suitable employment, where slavery and prejudice against color does not exist. Have they not in any way acknowledged their invaluable obligations to you, Servia?"

"Master Gilbert, the father and the mother of the little one were drowned in the wreck. None of her kindred has come forward to claim her, though they have been widely advertised for the last few months."

"That is strange! What has become of the poor child, then?"

"My mistress has adopted her, sir," answered Servia. And then, suddenly remembering her promise of secrecy in regard to the manner in which the child came into Mrs. Horah's possession, and dreading embarrassing questions, and feeling also very anxious to hear about the people of Godfrey's Farm, she abruptly, yet respectfully, inquired:

"How are they all at home, if you please, Master Gilbert?"

"All who are left are well, Servia, but great changes have taken place since your mistress left us. My brother and myself found it necessary to let the house and farm, and all the old hands who are left have been hired by the

new tenant. The aged and infirm are to retain possession of their quarters, and a portion of the wages of the young and able-bodied is to be devoted to their comfortable support. My brother Gideon and myself have determined to earn our own living. Gideon is overseer on the same farm that he was once master of, and I have come here to be a private tutor."

"Oh, Master Gilbert! That you should come to this! Oh, what would my dear old mistress say!" moaned Servia, in a heartbroken voice.

"My poor girl, you have forgotten all your mistress' teachings, if you do not recognize the righteousness of our course. What would she say? If she can look down from her blessed abode and see us, she will say: 'Well done, my sons!' So don't you take the matter so much to heart, my girl," solemnly replied the young man.

"Oh, I would not mind it for myself. I would not mind anything for myself. But for you! for you! For my dear old mistress' son. Oh, Master Gilbert! I would have been willing to die if that could have saved you from this!" cried the girl, vehemently wringing her hands.

Before the young man could do or say anything more to soothe this uncalled for excess of emotion—which can scarcely be understood by a stranger to the deep devotion sometimes felt by hereditary slaves for indulgent masters and mistresses, such as the unfortunate Godfreys had been from generation to generation—the door opened, and Mrs. Horah sailed into the room with the majestic air she could sometimes assume.

She had taken a dislike, almost amounting to hatred, to the whole race of tutors, and meant to make such an impression on this one as should, she said to herself, "put him in his proper place at the beginning."

Young Gilbert Godfrey rose and stood up. She saw before her a pale, refined, intellectual young man clothed in deep mourning. He bowed and silently presented his credentials.

She took the letter, read the address on the envelope and the line of writing below it: "To present Mr. Gilbert Godfrey."

"Yes, I am glad to see you, Mr. Godfrey. Pray resume your seat," she said, with a slight modification of

her majestic air as she sank into the easy-chair that Servia brought forward. It was then that she noticed for the first time the deep emotion of the girl, and, looking at her so keenly that the latter dropped her eys, she inquired:

"What is the matter with you?"

"This gentleman is the son of my old mistress, madam," falteringly replied the girl, relieving her bosom by a deep sigh.

"I hope you will excuse her, madam; she was very much devoted to my mother, who died in the very hour she was taken away from the farm. The unexpected sight of me revived the memory of these sad events, and overcame her," said the young man, deferentially.

"Naturally," assented the lady. Then, turning to the girl, she said: "Servia, you had better retire and try to compose yourself."

When the latter had dropped her courtesy, and left the room, the lady turned to the young man, and opened the conversation on his new relations toward her son and herself. She determined that, on this occasion, there should be no misunderstanding about the method of conducting his education. After a few preliminary remarks she went on to say:

"My son is a very sensitive and high-spirited youth; lordly and masterful, like all his highborn race. Blood, Mr. Godfrey, blood will tell! He is not at all to be treated as an ordinary schoolboy. His inclinations in regard to studies and hours must really always be consulted; and, to save inconvenience, pray let it be distinctly understood that in the event of any difference of opinion between my son and yourself, you are not, if you please, to try to enforce your views upon him, for I warn you that the attempt would prove a failure. But you are to appeal the case to me. Do you perfectly understand me?" she inquired, rather emphatically.

"Perfectly, madam. And pray permit me to say that I shall be glad and grateful to be so far relieved from the most delicate and difficult part of a tutor's responsibilities," replied the young man.

"I am happy to hear you say so, Mr. Godfrey. The want of a clear understanding on this point between myself and former tutors has led to much unpleasantness

May I inquire when you will be able to enter upon your duties here?"

"As soon as you please, madam. I have only to go to the hotel at Mistyrock and get my effects."

"Have you a conveyance waiting at the lodge gates? There is none at the door, I notice."

"No, madam. I walked here, and propose to walk back."

"Walked? Oh, Mr. Godfrey, you really must not think of such an undertaking. The carriage is quite at your disposal, if you must go in person; but if it be your effects only that you need go for, my old servant, Josias, is perfectly trustworthy, and you can send him in the cart, with an order on the landlord, to bring what you call for," said Isabel Horah, for she had really taken a fancy to this obliging young man.

"You are extremely kind, madam. If it be quite as convenient, I will hold myself indebted to you for the use of your carriage, as I have some business to transact at the hotel before I finally leave it."

Mrs. Horah smiled, for she perfectly understood that the business referred to must be the calling for and settling of his bill. But she said:

"Quite as convenient, Mr. Godfrey. I will ring and order the carriage at once."

She rose to do so, but the young man anticipated her and saved her the trouble.

Brush, who had just returned from his errand to Mistyrock, answered the bell, and received the order.

He had scarcely left the room when young Murdok Horah came in boisterously from some land wandering, and shouted:

"Oh, mother! you ought t'ave seen how Lep killed that squirrel! How——" He paused suddenly on seeing the stranger.

"This gentleman is your new teacher, Mr. Godfrey, my dear. Mr. Godfrey, here is your pupil," said the lady.

The boy bobbed his head and stared.

"I am glad to make your acquaintance, Master Horah. I hope we shall become very good friends," said Gilbert Godfrey, holding out his hand with a smile.

The refined face and modulated tone of the gentleman

had their effect on the young savage. Murdok looked at the speaker askance, but not malignantly, and took the offered hand, muttering:

"Yes, I reckon so."

At this moment Brush appeared at the door, and announced that the carriage was ready.

"Perhaps my young friend will give me the pleasure of his company on the drive?" said Mr. Godfrey, turning to Mrs. Horah.

"What do you say, Murdok?" asked the lady, smiling on her idol.

"All right," the boy condescended to answer.

"We shall now have an opportunity to become better acquainted with each other before our studies begin," added the tutor, as he rose to go.

Godfrey bowed and left the room. Murdok picked up his cap and followed.

As soon as the carriage had been driven away, Mrs. Horah went upstairs to see Servia, whom she found in her room, with the little Spanish child on her lap. Servia held a primer in her hand, from which she was teaching the infant her letters.

"Servia," said the lady, hastening at once to the subject that troubled her mind, "I hope you did not forget your sacred obligation; I hope you did not give Mr. Godfrey so much as a hint of—of——" She paused; she did not wish to speak plainly before the child, as young as she was, for, though she could not understand the subject now, she might remember the words and interpret them in after life.

Servia understood the question, the pause and the motive, and so she answered enigmatically:

"About the wickedness of Wharton? Oh, no, madam. Indeed you may rely on me! That secret is dead and buried in my heart."

"I believe you, Servia. I am satisfied," said the lady. And so the subject was dropped.

The tutor and his pupil returned in time for dinner. Isabel Horah saw at a glance that Gilbert Godfrey had already won the confidence of the boy, though how he had done it she could not guess.

"We are not going to begin lessons until to-morrow,

mother. But after dinner I am going to show Mr. Godfrey the dogs and horses," said Murdok, as he entered the hall and tossed his cap on the floor. The attentive Brush picked it up and hung it on the rack.

"With your approbation, madam," added the tutor.

"It shall be as you and Murdok please, Mr. Godfrey," replied the mother. "I wish you to be friends and companions, as well as teacher and pupil."

"Mr. Godfrey's the best tutor I've had yet. He told me how he used to hunt coons with a nigger called Ben, when he was a boy. That's the kind of fellow I want for a teacher!" exclaimed the boy.

Mrs. Horah expressed the hope that the kindly relations might continue.

Gilbert Godfrey bowed in silence.

CHAPTER XX.

VULTURE AND EAGLET.

We shape ourselves, the joy or fear
Of which the coming life is made,
And fill our future's atmosphere
With sunshine or with shade.—WHITTIER.

Young Gilbert Godfrey was more successful in training his contrary pupil than any of his predecessors had ever been. The reason was twofold. It is said that "Government is maintained by rewards and punishments." In his administration, young Godfrey found the benign or reward factor—which, by the way, he was only permitted to use—much more congenial to his feelings than the malign or punishment, which he was forbidden to try. So, when he found Master Murdok in an idle mood, he would say to him:

"Come, Murdok, my fine fellow! let's get through our exercises, and to-night we will go on a coon hunt!"

"All right," the boy would reply, and turn his attention to his lessons.

Or on another occasion he might say:

"Now, Murdok, wrestle with that problem until you

conquer it, and then we will lay aside our books and take our guns and go hunting."

Or if, as frequently happened, the young wretch was in a vicious mood, and refused to study on any terms, or to stay in the schoolroom, Godfrey would not contest the question, or even report the case to Mrs. Horah, for he knew what boys in general thought of informers and mischief-makers, but he would refer Murdok himself to his mother, requesting him to consult her. Once he was shocked by hearing the youth reply, "Oh, she! Look here, Mr. Godfrey! Maybe you don't know it, but I am master here; I am master of the Manor of Horah Hall. Celia says I am."

"Not until you reach your majority of twenty-one years of age, my boy," quietly replied the tutor.

"Father never made a will," continued the boy, without heeding the interruption; "Celia says so. She knows. So mother has not even a life interest in Horah Hall. Celia says so!"

"Oh, Murdok! Murdok!" exclaimed the young man, more pained than even his tone expressed.

"Not that it makes any difference, you know. Of course, mother must always have her home here," he had the grace to add.

The tutor made no observation on this concession, and Murdok was the next to break the silence that followed.

"Well," he said, "am I to ask her to give me a holiday to-day?"

"No," gravely replied the tutor, "you need not trouble your mother. I will take the responsibility for once, and authorize your departure."

"All right. You're a brick!" cried the boy, seizing his cap and darting from the schoolroom.

Gilbert Godfrey dropped his head upon his hand in troubled thought. He was a conscientious young man, and sincerely and earnestly anxious to do his duty. But he asked himself what was his duty between this too indulgent and confiding employer and his two self-willed, rebellious pupil? And who was this woman Celia to whom the boy so often referred, and who seemed to exercise so evil an influence over him. Was it not his duty,

he inquired of his conscience, to warn the mother of this evil? He refrained from sending Murdok to her in his present vicious mood, nor would he report the case to her. He shrank from giving her pain. But, really, it seemed to him now to be his bounden duty to speak to her about the boy's association with the injudicious, if not iniquitous, woman who was undermining all of Murdok's reverence, modesty and affection.

Not until after tea that evening, when Murdok had taken himself off somewhere, probably to Celia's cottage, and when the tutor was seated alone in the wainscoted parlor with the mistress of the house, did Godfrey venture very modestly to touch the subject by saying:

"I wonder where my young friend has gone to-night?"

"Oh, no doubt to Celia's cottage," she answered, with such a deep sigh that she thereby opened the way for Godfrey to speak.

"Is this woman Celia a proper companion for the boy?"

Mrs. Horah hesitated for an instant, and then inquired:

"Why do you ask? Excuse me, Mr. Godfrey."

"Only because I notice that he passes a great deal of his time in her company, and talks a great deal about her."

"She was his nurse and foster mother, too, through my long illness that followed his father's death. During that time she won a place in his affections which she has never lost. No, I do not quite approve of his devotion to his old nurse. It is the grief of my life, Mr. Godfrey."

"Can you do nothing, dear madam?"

"Nothing. It is too late. Interference would only make matters worse. But, oh, Mr. Godfrey," she exclaimed with sudden earnestness, "pray bear with my son! You have succeeded with him better than anyone else. He is so high-spirited, he cannot endure opposition. Bear with him."

"I will do the very best I can, madam, the Lord helping me," said the young man. And he kept his word, though his efforts were full of tribulation.

In the meanwhile, very different was the training of the little Zenobia. Mrs. Horah, indeed, made only a plaything of her, just as a child would of a doll; dressed her beautifully, if somewhat fantastically; gave her plenty of

toys and picture books, and taught her little nursery songs to sing. This was Mrs. Horah's amusement, whenever she had leisure to be amused during the daytime.

At other times the child was left to the sole charge of Servia. Nor could she have had a better nursery governess than this poor colored girl. Servia fulfilled two charges at Horah Hall—she was Mrs. Horah's seamstress and little Zenobia's nurse.

A large spare front room, on the opposite side of the hall from Mrs. Horah's chamber, had been fitted up as a nursery, and here Servia had her little iron bedstead and Zenobia her own. Here all day long Servia sat and sewed for her mistress, and, whenever Mrs. Horah was otherwise engaged, took charge of the child. Here Servia taught her to read in little words of three letters, under pictures which illustrated them, and to count, and even to make little pothooks and hangers with a slate and pencil, and also to hem. But, better than all these, she taught her truth, meekness, politeness and obedience; or, rather, she confirmed her in these virtues, which the tiny Spanish lady had already learned, perhaps inherited. All except meekness; for, notwithstanding all Servia's teachings, pride and passion sometimes flashed forth from the little Spanish spirit and eyes. And young Murdok Horah was generally the target at which they were fired.

The youthful master of Horah had grown very fond of the beautiful child, though in a lordly sort of way, as a boy might have grown fond of a puppy or a pony. He liked to play with her and to tease her. He liked to kiss and hug her, or to pinch and frighten her, just as his mood impelled him; or he liked to try to do these things. But he never succeeded in anything but pinches, and he had to creep behind her, and very stealthily and suddenly, to succeed in that, for she was as quick and alert as a bird. He could not kiss her, because she did not love him; nor frighten her, because she did not fear him. If he caught her in his arms, as one would catch a squirrel or a kitten, just for the fun of holding it, he would find that he had caught a wild cat, composed entirely of teeth and claws, and would be glad to let her go.

When these scenes occurred in the nursery, and in the

presence of Servia, the girl would expostulate with the young ruffian by saying, mildly:

"Oh, Master Murdok, you should respect a little lady more than that! And you should respect her all the more because she is so little and so helpless."

"You shut up! Helpless! Look at my face! The little beggar is a wild she-tiger! But I will be even with her yet!"

"Oh, Master Murdok! A little creature like that!"

"A little Tasmanian devil, like I've been reading about! But she will grow bigger and bigger all the time, and I will be even with her, if it takes all my life!" And with such words, after such scenes, he would usually bounce out of the room. Then it was the rule for Servia to take the little girl to task for her passion and violence.

Zenobia was now learning to speak English about as fast as an infant learns to talk. When she attempted to join in any conversation, she mingled Spanish and English in broken music very sweetly. Servia frequently said:

"My little darling, you should not scratch and bite—not anyone; and especially not the son of the good lady who has been so kind to you."

"Zenobia loves the dear señora; but the bad! bad! bad señor—no! no! no! He soils Zenobia's face." Then with a look of disgust she would take out her tiny pocket handkerchief and wipe the cheek he had touched.

The few that Zenobia loved might be counted on the fingers of one hand. They were Mrs. Horah, Servia, Nat Pryor and Gilbert Godfrey.

Soon there was added another one to the list—Oliver Pryor. The event that led to it came about in this way:

One sunny autumn day, Noll, as he was called for short, had been sent by his father to take a few bushels of pound pippins—which are large, deep red apples, weighing, on the average, a pound each—to Horah Hall. He had brought them in sacks in the village cart, driven by himself. He had just turned into the outer gate, jumped from the cart, and had thrown the reins to old Si, who came out of the lodge door, and was turning to walk up the path, when he saw the flying figure of a child in a crimson frock that seemed to dart across the bronzed lawn like a streak of fire.

She was hotly pursued by a boy. Noll recognized the boy as the young ruffian of Horah Hall, and guessed the child to be the little Spanish orphan, whom he had never seen before.

It was always a word and a blow with Noll Pryor; and generally the blow came first. He darted like an arrow to the rescue of the child. She, seeing him, ran toward him with outstretched arms, crying:

"Take me, señor! Oh, take me, quick! Take Zenobia!"

Noll snatched the child up to his shoulder, whispering:

"Don't be afraid. Nobody shall hurt you. See! I shall carry you right home to Mrs. Horah."

The child clung to him and hid her face on his fustian coat.

"Put her down, you beggar! Put her down! How dare you?" shouted Murdok, running toward them.

"I am going to take her to the house, to Mrs. Horah," said Noll, good-humoredly. Then he walked up the path, whispering to the child, "Don't be afraid!"

"Zenobia is not 'fraid! Not one time."

"Put her down!" roared Murdok. "You—you—you beggarly trash, how dare you disobey me on my own grounds?"

"I'd lay you flat on your back on your own grounds if my arms were not better employed!" exclaimed Noll, with perfect good humor.

Here the young savage burst into such a torrent of abuse that even Noll's forbearance forsook him. They were nearing the house now. Suddenly Noll whispered to the child:

"Now you make tracks and run in! I'll see that he shan't follow you. You are not afraid?"

"Oh, no, no, no, señor."

"Are you going to put the child down, or shall I break your cursed head?" roared Murdok.

"I am going to put her down, and attend to you this minute!" replied Noll, setting down the little one, who fled to the house for refuge.

Then Noll turned suddenly around, stooped, lifted his arms and ran at Murdok. With a vigorous blow in the mouth he staggered the youngster, then seized and threw

him over his head. The somersault might have broken the young ruffian's neck or back; but it did neither. It only stunned him, while Noll walked unconcernedly on to the house, asked for Mrs. Horah, and delivered his father's note that accompanied the present.

"Stay and take dinner with us," said the lady, who was seated in her usual place in the back parlor. Zenobia was nowhere to be seen.

"No, thank you, ma'am, I had better get back as soon as possible," replied Noll, with a peculiar smile.

"Then give my sincere thanks to your father," said the lady. "And when you go through the gate please tell old Si to put the apples for the present in the cellar of the lodge."

"Yes, ma'am."

Noll looked all around for the child, but she was nowhere to be seen. She had, in fact, fled at once to Servia in the nursery. Noll made his bow to the lady and went his way. As he went out on the lawn he saw Murdok just beginning to gather himself together.

The young savage shook his first furiously at the visitor and roared out:

"Oh, you"—a volley of unreportable epithets followed—and then the speaker added: "I will have you forbidden the house for this outrage!"

"All right," laughed Noll. "Only don't tease that little girl any more, or I'll give you another lift. Good-day," and Noll nodded and walked away, while Murdok was trying to get on his legs to follow. But by the time Murdok had dragged his bruised and stiffened frame to the lodge, Noll had mounted his cart and was driving up the road, and old Si was closing the gate.

"What's de matter, Marse Murdok?" inquired the old man, on seeing the discomposure of the boy.

"Have had a fall," replied the latter, who would almost have died rather than acknowledge his defeat by another boy.

"I's berry sorry. But yer's so rash and reckless, Marse Murdok, I won'er yer aine killed sometimes! Is yer hurt much?" sympathetically inquired Si.

"You hold your blasted jaw!" exclaimed the young

brute, infuriated at this illusion to his hurts, and he turned away and retraced his steps to the house.

Murdok never put into execution his threat of having Noll forbidden the house. Not that he repented or forgave young Pryor, or ceased from that day to be his bitter enemy, but because he was too proud to speak of the encounter in which he had met with such a very humiliating defeat. So it followed that Mrs. Horah never heard of the collision between the lads.

As for Noll, he had as good as forgotten it, for he never bore malice, and never suspected anyone else of doing so.

So the Pryors, father and son, continued to visit Horah Hall as usual. Noll always hailed Murdok in a pleasant tone, and if the latter turned gruffly away, he attributed it to a little lingering resentment that would soon pass off. But Zenobia remembered that encounter, and told Servia about it, in the broken melody of her mingled languages And from that day the handsome, brave, tender youth was the child's hero.

CHAPTER XXI.

ISABEL HORAH'S FEARS AND SORROWS.

Disenchantment! Disillusion!
Must each noble aspiration
Come at last to this conclusion,
Jarring discord, wild confusion,
Lassitude, renunciation!—LONGFELLOW.

Years rolled on. Gilbert Godfrey, through the exercise of the greatest prudence, self-control and patience, managed to endure his trials and remain at his post of duty at Horah Hall. He took a short summer vacation every year, and went to visit his brother, Gideon, at the old Maryland farm. The anticipation of these visits, and the realization of them, enabled the young tutor to endure the life at Horah Hall all the rest of the year.

By perseverance he succeeded in carrying his pupil through an elementary course of English, classical and mathematical studies. But this was the work of years,

so intermittent, careless and irregular was the attention of his pupil.

At length, about the close of June, when the time arrived for Godfrey's annual vacation, his long and arduous labors with his refractory pupil were completed. The youth was, he hoped, prepared for college, at least as well as the tutor could prepare him. So Godfrey had an interview with Mrs. Horah, in which he proposed to leave Horah Hall finally, on the first of the coming month of July.

But in all these years Mrs. Horah had become so accustomed to the young man that his presence in the house seemed indispensable to her comfort. His judicious treatment of her—heretofore—unmanageable son had won her gratitude and confidence. She took an affectionate interest in the tutor's welfare. Now that he proposed to leave her, she felt as if some younger brother were going away into the wide world. She did not speak for some minutes, and then she said, slowly:

"I am very sorry. You have been of invaluable service to Murdok. But if, in leaving here, you are going to improve your circumstances——" She paused.

"Better myself, as the maidservants say?" he added, with a smile. "No, dear madam. My future is uncertain. I may get a position as teacher, or I may go to farmwork, under my brother. As Heaven wills!"

Isabel Horah shuddered. She had no more idea of the dignity of manual labor than a North American Indian of the time of Columbus!

"Farm labor!" she said, in low, slow tones. "Farm labor for you, Mr. Godfrey?"

"Why not, dear madam?" he asked, with a smile.

"Do you prefer it?" she inquired.

"No. Yet, if I have no other alternative but idleness I shall plow and sow as cheerfully as I should teach and train, Mrs. Horah."

Again she was silent for some minutes. When she spoke it was to more purpose than one would have expected of her.

"Leave the plowing and sowing to able-bodied negroes and robust, uncultured white men. Do not take out of their hands the only work they can do. Keep to your own

work, which they, poor creatures, cannot do. Now, Mr. Godfrey, I should not make this proposition to you if you had any present prospect of an engagement worthy of your culture, character and abilities; but, as you say you have not, I will venture to ask you to do me the kindness to remain a year or two longer at this place, to assist me in carrying on the education of my adopted daughter, Zenobia de Leon."

The young man was so entirely taken by surprise that he could not at once answer.

She understood the expression of his face and hastened to add:

"Pray do not decline my offer hastily, impulsively, Mr. Godfrey. I am deeply in earnest. I am anxious to have you continue here—unless, of course, you can make a more advantageous engagement elsewhere," she added. "I am anxious for the girl's sake. But take time, and give me your answer to-morrow."

"My dear madam, I need no time to consider. I am simply overwhelmed by your kindness. My only hesitation arose from the doubt whether I could be of any real use to the young lady. The question whether—if it were not for your benevolent desire to benefit your son's poor tutor—you would not prefer to engage some accomplished lady as governess for your lovely young protégée."

"No! no! no!" cried Isabel Horah, emphatically. "All that the average governess could teach I have taught her. She can read, not only with distinctness, but with fine elocution. She can write, not only legibly, but grammatically. She can cast accounts; she can sketch from nature; she can play on the piano and guitar, and she can read and speak French. There! you should know that just as well as I do. But, Mr. Godfrey, I earnestly desire that she shall have a classical and mathematical course of studies under a competent master, such as yourself. I prefer you to any other. If you become her teacher I shall be very glad. If you will not, I shall have to find some one else."

"Madam, I should be only too happy," said Godfrey, but he still looked so puzzled that the lady went on to explain:

"You wonder why I want this unusual course of studies

for Zenobia? I will tell you. It is possible that the poor girl may have to earn her own living as a governess; if anything were to happen to me, for instance. And in these days, parents require a higher education for their girls than they did when I was young."

"I understand you now, madam, and I think your foresight and provision wise and prudent, if I may be permitted to give an opinion on the subject," he modestly added.

"Then you will continue on here as Zenobia's tutor?" she inquired, with a smile of satisfaction.

"I shall be most happy to do so, since I can be of use to you and the young lady. Or, rather," he added, with a smile, "to return here after my annual visit to my brother at the old farm in Maryland."

"And I sincerely hope that you will not find this place very, very dreary without Murdok, for he will have gone to college by the time you return here," said Mrs. Horah, anxiously.

Gilbert Godfrey had all he could do to repress a grimace at this allusion to the young brute as a lost attraction in his future sojourn at Horah Hall. But he succeeded, and answered gravely and politely, though with a hidden meaning:

"I shall miss my interesting pupil, of course, but I like this fine old house, with its grand surrounding scenery, and which your kindness has made like a true home to me; so I feel that I shall be quite contented here."

So that matter was satisfactorily settled.

On the first of July Gilbert Godfrey left Horah Hall to pay his annual visit to his brother, with the promise to return on the first of September.

Murdok selected the University of Virginia, at Charlottesville, as his *alma mater*.

When the fond mother heard of this decision she, in her devotion to her only son, would have broken up her household at Horah Hall, and have rented and furnished a tenement in that town, and moved there to make a temporary home for him, to guard him from temptation and danger during his college course.

But the self-willed and headstrong youth would have nothing of that sort. He had freedom enough, and too

much for his own good, at Horah Hall, but he luxuriated in the anticipation of greater freedom in the town, where neither mother's nor tutor's eye could be upon him. So he answered the proposal of a home in Charlottesville by rudely saying that he did not contemplate being tied to any woman's apron strings, or submit to petticoat government any longer! That he was not only master of Horah Hall Manor, but his own master as well! And much more to the same purpose. Finally, if his steps were to be dogged by women at Charlottesville, he would not go to college at all!

This was not the first time the youth had opposed, defied and almost insulted his mother; yet, now that he was about to leave her, she took his conduct more grievously to heart than ever. But she acquiesced in his wishes. At this stage of the young rebel's career what else could the poor woman do?

So, at the beginning of the last week in August, young Murdok Horah left home for college. His mother accompanied him as far as the railway station, for he would not consent for her to go further with him, declaring that he was no longer a schoolboy, to be watched and tended like a child, etc., etc., etc. She saw him off, and then returned home, very anxious and sorrowful.

She could no longer quite deceive herself as to Murdok's faults, or call his selfishness, arrogance and obstinacy by such fine names as independence, manliness and high spirit! What would now become of him, left to his own devices at Charlottesville? Would he be amenable to the authority of the faculty of the university—he who had never been trained to submit to any authority in his life? It was too unlikely! Would he rebel, fall into trouble, disgrace and ruin? Ah, Heaven! this was too probable. And she, his mother, who would have laid down her life to save him, could now do nothing! Nothing but pray for him and write him daily letters of wise and loving counsel, which she felt might only bore, without restraining him. Poor soul! she was already beginning to reap as she had sown!

Uncle Si, who had driven the carriage on that occasion, as soon as he had fed his horses and washed his vehicle, went home to his lodge by the gate, and "put Master

Murdok on de banjo," in no very complimentary terms. But his mother never heard of it. She shut herself up in her room, and would not have anyone come near her—not even Zenobia.

"Never mind, my dear! We must leave the mistress to herself for a little while. You see, she was never parted from Master Murdok before, in all their lives. And, although he is—well, no matter what he is—he is her son, her only son; all she has in this world! That is why she feels his absence so," said Servia, when she saw Zenobia's eyes full of tears because Mrs. Horah passed her by, entered her bedroom and locked the door.

"But, Servia, dear, I only wanted to love and comfort, and kiss her! It is not my fault if I am not her very own child! And I do love her so much!" pleaded Zenobia.

"And she loves you, my darling, and she will take much comfort in your love after a little while," said the woman, soothingly.

That afternoon Col. Pryor rode over, accompanied by Oliver, to see the widow, and cheer her up for the absence of her boy. But Mrs. Horah excused herself, and could not see them.

The visitors consoled themselves with Zenobia, who did her very best to entertain them. She took them into the front drawing room, where Mrs. Horah's grand piano stood, and offered to play for them.

"And what shall I play?" she asked, when she had taken her seat and lifted the lid of the instrument.

"Play 'A Life on the Ocean Wave!' It is an old-fashioned thing, but I have heard you play it. And I am an old-fashioned man!" said Nat Pryor.

Zenobia smiled and searched on the music stand for a shabby old book, belonging to Isabel Horah's school collection, and found the song, laid the book open before her and began to play the prelude. The instrument was a fine one, and in perfect tune. Zenobia's touch was sympathetic, and the effect was inspiring.

"We can all sing that song," said the colonel, jovially.

Zenobia's voice rose, rich, full and sweet. As her tones soared, birdlike, on the air, Oliver chimed in, followed by Col. Pryor. They formed a splendid trio. Zenobia's voice was a rich contralto; Oliver's a fine tenor, and Col.

Pryor's a deep bass. The music rose and rolled, resounding through the room in a joyous storm of harmony. But the singers had scarcely concluded the first stanza, when Mrs. Horah's bell was violently rung.

Zenobia rose in dismay. Her dark eyes dilated to twice their natural size.

"Why, what's the matter, my love?" inquired the colonel.

"Oh! I have disturbed her. Her room is just over this!" said the girl, as she closed the piano.

At that instant Delphine, the housemaid, entered the parlor and said:

"If you please, Miss Snowby, de madam says how yer mus' shet up de pianny. She can't stan' enny noise today."

"Oh! I am so sorry I began to play. Please tell her so, Delphine! And say I shut the instrument the very instant I heard her bell," said Zenobia.

The servant left the room with this message. Nat Pryor rose, with a deep sigh, and said:

"Well, Noll, my man, I think we had better make tracks for 'The Notches.'"

"Not until you have had some refreshments on this hot day," interposed Zenobia. "Servia has gone to fetch them; and—here she comes now!"

The woman at this moment entered the parlor, carrying a waiter on which was arranged a tempting light repast of iced lemonade, cake and strawberries and cream.

When the visitors had partaken of these delicacies, with much enjoyment, they bade good-afternoon to their young hostess and went away.

"She is like a daughter of the house," said Oliver, as they mounted their horses and rode away.

"She is a daughter of the house, to all intents and purposes. There is no other daughter! Ah, Noll, I wish she were a daughter of our house. I would have gladly adopted her if the widow would have given her up. She is growing from a beautiful child into a very beautiful girl. I fear for her future, my boy!"

"But why, young marse? No one could be so devilish as to hurt that sweet creature," confidently replied Oliver.

"No one! Yes, that cursed cur could! Heaven for-

give me for speaking so of Isabel Horah's son," sighed the widow's middle-aged lover.

"But how could he? It is true he used to tease her when he was a mere boy, and she a little more than a baby."

"Until you thrashed him into better manners, Noll," interrupted the colonel.

Oliver laughed.

"At any rate, they have both outgrown those days. He cannot hurt her now," he said.

"More than ever, Noll. More than ever!"

"How so, father?"

"Noll, in two or three years this girl will develop into the most beautiful woman in Virginia, perhaps the most beautiful in the whole world! If that satyr's whelp sets the eyes of his evil wishes on her, he will have her in defiance of herself, of Heaven and of earth. And if he should get her, he will kill her!" groaned the colonel, with such a far-away gaze of disastrous prophecy in his usually merry blue eyes, that Oliver, who certainly displayed a keen sense of the ridiculous, burst into a roar of laughter, saying, as soon as he could recover himself:

"Why, dad, you are as bad as the maid in the story, who fell into hysterics at the thought of the possibility that she might get married and have a child who might be burned to death!"

"Oh, Noll, you may laugh, but I wish the fair widow had allowed me to adopt that girl."

"You are borrowing trouble a long way ahead, young marse!"

"Noll, I know the terrible Horahs!"

"Now, hold on, dad! No Horah shall ever harm that sweet girl. I swear it! I call Heaven to witness my oath! And to deal with me as I shall keep it!" said Oliver, in a deep, earnest tone, as he lifted his cap and reverently bowed his head.

Further confidential conversation was impossible just then, because they were joined by the rector, the Rev. Mr. Melville, who had been making sick calls in the neighborhood, and who now overtook them.

Mr. Melville, by the way, was Oliver Pryor's preceptor. The good colonel could not afford to send his son to col-

ege, and so the reverend gentleman had undertaken, for a consideration, to direct the youth's studies. Oliver went to the rectory for an hour every day.

After pleasant greetings the three horsemen rode on together.

Mrs. Horah kept her room, and spent her time, for the first few days of Murdok's absence, in weeping and writing long letters to him. She might have moped longer still, if, on the Saturday, Gilbert Godfrey had not arrived, and the duties of hospitality had not claimed her.

She went downstairs to see him, and welcomed him with a sort of sorrowful cordiality.

Godfrey knew the cause of her depression, and was grieved for her. He could understand how the lonely widow, living in that remote, dreary old country house, should feel the separation from her only son and child, almost as deeply as the mother of many sons and daughters might feel the loss of one of them by death. So, instead of blaming her, even in his transient thought, for her indulgence in sorrow, he set to work with all his skill to divert her thought from dwelling on her loneliness. He told her of his own college days. First at Charlotte Hall, in Maryland, and afterward at that very University of Virginia to which her son had gone. He spoke in the very highest terms of the moral and intellectual character of the learned professors, many of whom had remained there from his time to the present. There was no such thing as "hazing" there. The students, in manners, at least, were all gentlemen.

Mrs. Horah was much comforted by all this information. She never wearied of asking questions, and hearing talk about the institution that was to be Murdok's home for some years to come.

CHAPTER XXII.

A SURPRISE AT "THE NOTCHES."

Heap on more wood! The wind is chill;
But let it whistle as it will,
We'll keep our Christmas merry still.

—WALTER SCOTT.

It was Christmas Eve. The snow lay two feet deep on the level, covered the mountain tops and slopes, and weighed down the trees. A cold, blue-black sky, studded with countless numbers of scintillating stars, canopied the wintry landscape.

Gleams of firelight flickered from the chinks in the doors and windows of the log huts in the negro quarters, and nestled among the trees at the foot of the mountain. Such was the scene without.

Within every hut the negroes were keeping Christmas Eve with plenty of Christmas cheer, supplied for the occasion by their merrymaking master. The sounds of the fiddle and the banjo were heard from several of the huts. Presently, perhaps, they would all assemble in one of the largest huts for a dance.

Meanwhile, in the "big house," as the negroes called their master's dwelling, another festive scene was going on.

In the long parlor, which was never used except on high days and holidays, a great fire had been built of hickory logs in the broad and deep chimneyplace, at the extreme end of the room. The glowing and brilliant light of this fire quite dimmed the two wax candles burning on the mantelpiece, as well as the whale-oil lamp that hung from the ceiling; and while it revealed the size and bareness of the room, it seemed to make up, by its cheerfulness, for the lack of much other furniture. For the long parlor in the big house at "The Notches" was no better fitted up than most of the other parlors of the best houses of that time and place. It is worth description, though, as a typical one.

It was long, as has been said; and broad and high. It

had a wide door, leading out into the hall at the lower end opposite the fireplace. It had three tall windows in front, on the left hand as you entered. They were hung with plain blue paper shades. The floor was of hard Norfolk pine, but so yellow and smooth that it looked like satinwood. It was perfectly bare, except for a faded rug that lay before the hearth. That hearth was of red brick, and clean and bright as sealing wax. It was inclosed by a high, polished, steel fender, with a bright brass top. Tall, bright, brass andirons supported the heavy logs. Shovel and tongs were of polished steel, with bright brass handles. Nothing could have been cleaner, livelier or more attractive than this fireside. The whitewashed walls of the room were adorned with some old oil paintings, family portraits of the Pryor forefathers. A few stiff, high-backed, oaken chairs stood against the sides of the room. In the recess on the right of the chimney stood an old mahogany bookcase, with glass doors, filled with old, shabby, priceless editions of rare books. In the corresponding left-hand recess stood a secretary of the same size and height as the bookcase, and which was half writing desk and half cabinet, where the master of the house did most of his writing and kept all his papers. In the corners at the lower end of the room stood a pair of tables with folding leaves. In the middle of the floor stood a round mahogany table, that served either for games or refreshments, as the occasion called for.

Around this table were seated four men, Col. Pryor and three of his old neighbors, celebrating Christmas Eve over a foaming bowl of eggnog, while they were also engaged in their favorite game of "seven-up." In each man's hand was a set of cards, which he was studying wistfully. By the side of each stood a large tumbler of the white, fragrant and frothy beverage. They might have looked like a rather disreputable party, but indeed they were not. They were all temperate, though not total abstainers. Nor were they gamblers, though they played as eagerly to win the game as if it had been for thousands.

"Where's Noll to-night?" inquired Mr. Alexander Kieth, a tall, red-haired, red-bearded old farmer, whose land joined that of Col. Pryor.

"Oh, Noll's off to Horah Hall. It is lonesome here for

the lad when we are round the card table, you know. He'll be back to-night, though," replied his father.

"Making hay while the sun shines, isn't he?" inquired Mr. Bill Estep, a short, fat, smooth-faced man, with a bald head, who had left the care of his apothecary shop to his clerk, and had come to spend a social evening with that all-popular host, Nat Pryor.

"What do you mean, Estep?" inquired the colonel.

"Taking advantage of young Murdok being away at college to cut him out with that pretty little Spanish gypsy, isn't he? Not that I blame him. I would do it myself if I could. But I reckon I am too old."

"And too fat and too bald, Billy," chimed in the third guest, Mr. Clem Kent, a slight, dark, young man, who had just opened a law office in Mistyrock.

"It is early in the day, gentlemen, for such speculations in regard to the little lady at Horah Hall," gravely commented Col. Pryor.

"Not a bit of it. Why, in our neighboring State, Maryland, the law allows a girl to marry at the age of twelve, and Miss de Leon must be fourteen or fifteen, and well developed at that," declared Bill Estep.

Before anyone could answer this statement the joyous ringing of sleigh bells sounded coming up the road, and was quickly followed by a thundering knock at the door. There was not a servant left in the house. They had all got a holiday, and were keeping Christmas Eve at the negro quarters.

"Who, in Heaven's name, can that be? At this time of night, too! I haven't a neighbor in the world who possesses a sleigh except Mrs. Horah, and she would never come out at night," said Nat Pryor, with good-humored astonishment as he laid down his cards, and went to open the door.

"Perhaps the pretty widow has sent Noll home in her sleigh," suggested the young lawyer.

"Ah! that's it, of course," chimed in the other two. But it wasn't.

For, as soon as Col. Pryor opened the door, there burst into the hall a young girl clothed in sealskin furs from head to foot, who rushed up to him, exclaiming:

"How do, Uncle Nat? Why didn't you come to meet me at the train?"

"God bless my soul alive, Jim! Where did you come from? But come right in to the fire before you answer me," exclaimed the colonel, in the last extremity of astonishment. Then, perceiving the figure of a little old negro man behind her, he cried out, "Hallo, Si!"

"Sarvant, Marse Co'nel," replied the polite poet of Horah, taking off his old foxskin cap and bowing very low.

"Come in, man; come in! Don't stand there with a bare head," kindly pressed the colonel.

"T'anky, Marse Colonel, but I'se got to git back ter de house soon's ebber I helps in long o' young missy's trunk, an' ban'box an' fings," replied the old man.

"There, go in there, my love, and take off your wraps and make yourself comfortable. You can explain afterward," said the colonel, as he opened a door of a cozy little sitting room opposite the long parlor, where there was a good fire burning.

"I think it is you who will have to explain, Uncle Nat," rejoined the girl, as she entered the room and threw herself into a chair before the fire.

"Wait a moment, Si, and I will help you in with all that luggage," said the colonel, as he turned and went back into the long parlor, where he had left his guests at the card table, burning with curiosity.

"You will excuse me, gentlemen; my niece, Jemima Abbace, has just arrived most unexpectedly, and, in the absence of every servant from the house I must see to her comfort. I will not be away more than fifteen minutes."

"Niece?"

"Sister's child!"

"Come to spend Christmas! How jolly!" were the exclamations that followed the announcement of the news, as the good colonel smiled and bowed himself out.

He looked into the little parlor, saw that Jemima was comfortably established before the fire, and then turned to Si, and said:

"Come, let us get the luggage in at once!"

They went out together, and brought in between them a large trunk, which they put down on the floor of the

hall. They sallied forth a second time and returned with a bandbox each, which they placed upon the trunk.

"Now, Si," said the colonel, as he threw himself into one of the hall chairs to recover his breath, "you will oblige me very much by stopping at the negro quarters, as you go by, and telling old Druse of Miss Jemima's arrival, and asking her to come up to the house for a little while, to attend to the young lady's comforts, and to bring Otto with her to make the fire in the spare room. I do hate to interrupt the poor things at their Christmas frolics, but there is really no alternative. You'll remember, Si?"

"Sartinly, Marse Colonel, sartinly, sah! Anyfing else I kin had de honah ob doing fo' yer, Marse Colonel, sah?" inquired the old negro.

"No, thank you, Si. But I would like to know, if you are not in too great a hurry to be off, how it happened that you were so opportunely at the railway station, where my niece had no one to meet her?"

"Oh, Marse Colonel, wahn dat providenshal? I mus' take de time ter tell yer 'bout dat. Bad news, dat wil' keep fo' de madam."

"What bad news? Nothing the matter with young Murdok, I hope?" exclaimed Nat Pryor, quick to take alarm where his "adored" was interested.

"Nuffen, 'nless it's ole Nick, beggin' yer pardin', Marse Colonel. Yo' see, it wer' jes dis way: De madam hab be'n expectin' ob de youn' marse all de week, 'ca'se she kno' how de big collidge be closed fer de holidays. So she hab be'n writin' ebery day, an' sen'in' me to de station ebery day, to see ef he doane com'. I done be'n waitin' dere at de station all dis bressed day—waitin' fer ebery train w'at com' in, but no Marse Murdok! Oh, I tell yer, Marse Colonel, he's a hummer, dat youn' youf is. Las' train com' in, Ch'is'mas Ebe, at nite, an' no Marse Murdok. But de youn' miss got out, an' she de onlies' passinger fer our place. I was jes' gwine ter turn roun' an' dribe 'way, w'en dat youn' miss, she com' up an' she say: 'Uncle, is yer sent by Col. P'yor fer me?' she say. An' I ans'er an' say: 'No, miss, I aine sent by no Col. P'yor.' Den she look' sca'ed, an' she look all roun' de place like she wer' lookin' out fer somefin', an' she axed if dere wer'

any we'cle be'n sent fer her. An' I tell her 'No,' 'ca'se I's de o'ny one be'n dere all day. An', ah, marse, ef yer cou'd seen dat youn' gal's face!"

"I shudder to think of it," said the colonel.

" 'He didn't git fader's letter,' she said. 'Oh, w'at shil I do?' Den I speaks up, an' say as how it wahn't much outen my way, an' I cou'd gib her a lif' as fer as De Notches. An', oh, Marse Colonel! sah, ef yo'd seen dat youn' gal's face den!"

"I can imagine it," said the colonel, with a sigh.

"De way she t'anked me! I felt as gran' as a king w'en I helped her inter de sleigh. An' me an' de agent h'isted her trunk an' t'ings. An' den didn't I make dem hosses fly over de snow! But, oh, Marse Colonel, sah! W'at 'ould 'come ob dat youn' gal ef I hadn't be'n on de spot, de Lor' on'y knows!' concluded Si.

"I cannot bear to think of it,' groaned the colonel. "How her father's letter could have miscarried I do not understand. But we are greatly indebted to you, Si! Here, old man, is a Christmas present for you," he added, as he pressed a quarter eagle into the old minstrel's hand.

Si bowed very low and said, with profound emotion: "I t'ank yer, sah. I t'ank yer! Dis is de berryest proudes' an' happies' day ob my life! It is, Marse Co'nel, sah!" And no doubt it was, for not only was his soul exceedingly exalted in his own estimation, by his chivalrous adventure of the evening, which would furnish him with matter for boasting by many a log cabin fireside for many years to come, but—oh, fortune!—he held in his hand the largest piece of money he ever possessed, or ever dreamed of possessing.

"There, there! That will do. Good-night," said the colonel, laughing.

Si made another profound obeisance and went out, jumped into the sleigh and drove off, with the joyous sleigh bells ringing out upon the wintry night air.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CHRISTMAS IN THE NEGRO QUARTERS.

And the baron's retainers were blithe and gay,
Keeping their Christmas holiday!—OLD SONG.

His way lay down the carriage road bordered by trees whose bare branches were hung with icicles instead of leaves, on through the great gateway and out into the snow-covered road that skirted the foot of the precipice, under the shelter of which was the group of log huts—about twenty in number—known as the negro quarters. From every one of these huts the red light streamed through the crevices of the rude doors and the little, glazed windows, out upon the snow-matted ground, while the sound of music and dancing burst upon the air. It was a merry, happy, tempting scene.

Si drew up his jingling sleigh before the largest cabin, which stood in the middle of the group, and was owned by Tim, the foreman of the field hands, who lived there with his wife, Druse, who was housekeeper up at the "big house," as Col. Pryor's mansion was called, and his son Otto, who was waiter.

As the sleigh stopped, the door of the cabin flew open, the music within ceased, and a crowd of negroes came out to see who was there, and, recognizing Si, welcomed him by acclamation.

"Si, I didn't know it wer' yo' w'at went by de quarters like a flash ob lightnin' half a' hour ago! I t'ought it wer' some wisiter ob ole marser's to spen' de ebenin'," said Druse.

"So it wer' a wisiter, on'y she's not gwine 'way no mo', I reckon.' said Si, mysteriously.

"Who? Who? Who?" demanded a chorus of men and women.

"Marse Co'nel's niece, w'ich he call her Jim! a rum name fer a putty youn' miss! An', Aunt Druse, Marse Co'nel tole me ter ax yer will yer 'blige him by comin' up ter de hous' ter tend ter dat youn' gal? W'ich he also

did say, Marse Co'nel did, as he wer' werry sorry ter 'sturb yer, an' fer yer ter fo'ch Otto 'long o' yer."

Too full of curiosity to mind leaving the festive scene, Druse ran into the cabin, flung her heavy plaid shawl over her head and shoulders, and hastened away toward the house, followed by Otto in a run.

Meantime the other negroes were importunate in their demands that Si should "'light" and enter the cabin to join in the festivities. Above all others was heard the voice of Tim, vociferating:

"Come in, Uncle Si'as! We's a g'eat contest on han'! Marse Nat, he gib a beau'ful brierwood pipe, jes' like de one he smoke', I reckon it cos' a dollah! An' de man w'at dance de bes' jig step, he ter hab de pipe!"

"An' who's gwine ter 'cide?" inquired Si.

"It a-gwine ter be put ter a wote dis way: Non' ob us can't read ner yite, so Uncle No', who is de oldes' culled ge'man on de place, is ter set inter de chair, an' w'en we've all p'formed fer de prize, den we's all ter go up one at a time, an' w'isper inter Uncle No's ear de name ob de one we fabers."

"An' how menny is yer?" asked Si.

"All ob us cullid ge'men is gwine ter try fer dat pipe, yer may tak' yer oaf!"

"Is de ladies' gwine ter wote?" slyly inquired Si.

"No, sah," very decidedly replied Tim. "We doane 'low wimmen ter wote on dis!"

"Who 'wented dis way ob 'cidin'?" curiously inquired Si.

"Marse Co'nel his'ef!" replied Tim, with pride.

"H'm!" grunted Si, with significance, as he threw a thick blanket over the back of his horse, and followed Tim into the cabin; for the temptations of the scene had been too much for Si's fidelity.

The inside of the cabin consisted of one large room, with a hard-beaten earth floor, rough log walls, and a deep and broad fireplace at the end opposite the door, and little side windows. A brilliant fire of pine knots was blazing in the fireplace and filling the festive scene with dazzling light.

Every article of furniture except a few stools and one

chair had been carried to the loft above, and the floor was cleared for dancing.

Old Noah, the patriarch of the plantation, sat in the chair of state, between the chimney corner and a little window, smoking a corncob pipe. He was a very tall and gaunt negro, with hair and beard as white as snow, and a face as black as ink. He was really ninety-one years old, but claimed to be over a hundred.

"More or less, chillun! I is more or less! 'ca'se I wou'dn' fa'sify de trufe, not in de ole age ob my pilg'im-age, I wou'dn'," he was always careful to say.

Besides him there were present some thirty other negroes—men, women and children. These were crowded against the walls, some standing, some sitting on the few stools, and some on the ground floor; while perched on the rungs of the ladder that led up to the loft sat the two musicians of the evening, who were named Raphael and Ignatius, but were commonly caled Rafe and Nace. Rafe played the fiddle and Nace the tambourine; they always hunted in couples and were always spoken of together. "Like pork and beans, or bacon and cabbage," old Druse declared. They were past fifty, small, slight, jet-black, light-hearted and proud of their profession; for they had been musicians from their boyhood, and had played at Miss Pryor's wedding with Lieut. Abbace, and at Col. Pryor's home-coming with his bride.

Si got as near Uncle Noah as he could contrive to do, passed the compliments of the season to the old man, and set himself to watch the contest for the pipe, that was about to begin.

Uncle Noah, who was master of ceremonies for the occasion, raised himself to his feet, and said with much dignity:

"Mis'er Timofy P'yor will 'blige de comp'ny by takin' ob de flo'."

Tim, "first in honor as in place" of that gathering, sprang into the middle of the floor, and, speaking to the company at large, said:

"Now, ladies an ge'men, I has de honah ob gwine ter sho' yer a new step w'at I larn'd down at de depo' t'oder day, w'en I seed some circusses or mins'els fellers awaitin' fer de train, an' one ob dem war a tryin' ter keep hisse!

warm by dancin' on de platfo'm de way dat I'se gwine ter sho' yer, 'case I'se be'n practicin' it ebber sence! Now yo' ge'men wif de fiddle an' tambourine, yo' please fer ter 'blige de company by striking up dat chune I done tell yer 'bout, an' I'll sho' yer de g'apewine twis'. Fire 'way! I'se off!'

The "band" struck up, and Tim sprang at once into the air, and came down, first rattling his heels upon the earthen floor in a shower of digs that made the clay fly, and clapping his hands upon his thighs in a rain of blows that proved the temper of his hands and the toughness of his skin, in an energetic and frantic dance.

A burst of applause followed his first pause for breath.

When he commenced again, the measure of the music and the movements of the dancer changed! It was now wonderful—just wonderful! His legs seemed no longer solid limbs of flesh and bone, but supple serpents, with flexible vertebræ!

They wound round and round, in and out, turning, twisting, untwisting and returning, with such amazing velocity that the eye could not follow their lightning evolutions. The performance was beyond the power of pen to portray. It must have been seen to be appreciated.

Wild cries of delight and enthusiasm almost drowned the sound of the music. And when, at last, Tim dropped exhausted on the nearest vacant stool, the hullabaloo was deafening. It was as if the whole crowd had gone mad! Old Uncle Noah had to wait until the maniacs had spent themselves before he could attempt to restore order. Cider and ginger nuts were then handed round, and the company consumed a quantity before old Uncle Noah called:

"Time!"

The band struck up "Juba," and the second candidate took the floor.

It is not our intention to describe the performance of each aspirant for the honors of the prize.

"Hope springs eternal in the human breast."

Therefore every negro man and boy present, except the patriarch, the minstrel and the two musicians, who were all ineligible, was resolved to try his fortune; and

all jigged fairly well, for dancing, like singing, is a natural accomplishment of the negro. But none equaled the hero of the "grapevine twist."

When the last dancer had retired amid a good-natured round of applause, Uncle Noah rose, enjoined silence, and announced that he was ready to receive the votes of the company for the awarding of the prize, as he should call out their names, ending with: "Massa Timofy P'yor will please walk for'ard an' 'liver his 'pinion ter me."

When the old man had resumed his seat, Tim stepped briskly up and whispered a name into the ear of the patriarch, who nodded gravely, and called up the next voter.

One after another they came up and whispered a name into Uncle Noah's ear, who always bowed gravely. When all the votes had been cast in this remarkable manner there was a hush of eager expectation in the assembly.

Uncle Noah once more rose, cleared his throat, and said:

"Ladies and ge'men! I nebber wer' placed in sich a 'barrasin' siterashun in all de days ob my pilg'image! 'Pears like ebery ge'men hab woted for hisse'f! Ebery ge'man hab w'ispered his own name inter my ear. So ebery candidate hab got one wote cast by hisse'f, an' no mo.' 'Pears ter me ge'men as dis is like w'at de white folks calls a 'tested 'lection. An' I doane know w'at ter do!" concluded the old man. And down he sat and consoled himself with his corncob pipe.

"Kik! kik! kik!" laughed Si. "I knowed it! I knowed it f'om de firs'! Marse Co'nel P'yor's fun! Kik! kik! kik! He knowed ebery nigger'd wote fer his own se'f habin' dat pipe! An' I knowed it, too! Kik! kik! kik!"

Meantime a hubbub was rising in the room that threatened to be a riot, when Uncle Noah rose and lifted his long arms aloft and in a loud voice cried: "Ge'men!"

Silence was instantly restored, for they all respected the veteran, who continued: "Ge'men! Ef yer calls yerse'ves ge'men, 'have as sich! 'Fo' ladies, too!"

This had its effect, and order was restored, and Uncle Noah dropped breathless into his seat, for there is not much standing power at ninety.

"W'at 'ould yer 'vise us ter do unner de succumstances, Uncle Noah?" inquired a voice from the crowd.

"Yes, Uncle Noah! Yo' tell us!" chimed in a chorus of other voices.

As soon as the old man had recovered himself, he took his pipe from his mouth, and spoke from his chair:

"Ge'men, yer can't all hab de pipe, dough yer all has ekal rites ter habbin' it, 'case yer hab ekal wotes, w'ich is one a piece! Each one is firs' bes' ch'ice fo' his own se'f. But no one kin hab de pipe, 'case yer all firs' bes'! So I now perposes dat yer all compermise on secon' bes'! Dem in fabor ob my perposil, p'ease ter say, Ay!"

"Ay! Ay! Ay!" went unanimously all around the room.

"Dem ob a contraywise 'pinion, p'ease ter say, No!"

Not a dissenting voice was raised.

"De ayes hab it," said Uncle Noah. Then he took a few puffs from his corncob pipe, and spoke again.

"Now, ge'men, I'se gwine ter perpose de candidates one at er time. Fus', Mr. Timofy P'yor, who 'stinwish hisse'f so much in de new 'g'apewine twis.' Dem in fabor of Mr. Timofy P'yor gettin' de prize pipe will p'ease ter say, Ay!"

"Ay! Ay! Ay!" went around the room, but not unanimously.

"Dem ob contraywise 'pinion, p'ease ter say, No!"

A few vigorous noes came from the crowd.

"De ayes hab it ag'in. Mr. Timofy P'yor will p'ease com' for'rd an' be 'wested wiv de honah ob de prize," said Uncle Noah, rising with much dignity and some difficulty, and drawing from his coat pocket a paper parcel containing the pipe.

The successful candidate marched up to the "chair," supported on either side by a companion, and bowed.

"Massa Timofy P'yor, sah, I hab de s'peme honah of 'westin' yer wid dis pipe, 'warded ter yer by yer 'panions fer yer p'fomances dis ebenin'. May it proobe ter yer de pipe ob peace an' good will, Amen!"

Tim received the address with a mingling of humility and exultation.

"Massa cha'man, sah!" he began with embarrassment and hesitation. "I is dumfoundered 'long ob my heart

bein' too full—fer—fer—— Will some ge'men p'ease ... han' me a drink?" he suddenly broke off and begged.

A mug of cider was brought to him. He took it, and muttered:

"De healf ob de comp'ny!" and emptied it at a draught.

More cider and ginger nuts were served around, and when these were consumed there was a general cry for Mr. Sias Horah to favor the company with a performance on the banjo.

"How yer kno' I brung my banjo?" demanded Si, not ill pleased at this new proof of his popularity.

"I seen it in de sleigh, an' I tole on yer!" retorted Tim.

"Oh, gib us a chune, Uncle Sias," cried several of the women in a chorus.

"Yes, an' let it be a real imp'ovidence!" said one of them. She meant improvisation, a word she had caught up from her master.

Si was bubbling over with delight! There was nothing he desired more than to have such an opportunity as this, of singing his own praises, by putting his adventure of the evening "on be banjo."

"Well, ladies and ge'men!" he began, "sence yer so pressin', an' seein' as yer's all frens', an' woane 'port ter miss'es, I ll jes' complimen' young Marse Murdok. 'Scuse me a minnit, tell I gits my banjo."

He soon returned with his instrument, tuned it up, and commenced:

How de Young Miss Wer' Sabed.

My mistress libs at Horah Hall,
As is well known unto yer all.
She hab a son bof strong an' tall
An' him was 'way in college wall.
She 'spec' him home fo' Christmas ebe,
But she wer' berry much deceibe!
She sent me ter the railway train
Ebery day in wind or rain!
But ebery time he wasn't dere,
An' she got mo' an' mo' a scare.
Dis berry nite, t'rough win' an' sno'
I went ter meet dat boy; but, no!
He wasn't dere, but in his stead
A sweet youn' miss, with cheeks as red——"

Perhaps this is enough. To give the whole would be

to print pages of doggerel. We already know something of Si's style of minstrelsy, though, in justice to him, it should be said that his improvisations sounded much better when sung by his really sweet voice, accompanied by his skillful touch, than they look in cold print. His performance was received with great applause. But when the company were assured that this "ballad" recorded a real adventure of the singer, and that Si had, indeed, saved the young niece of Col. Pryor from the great danger of freezing to death outside the railway station, he became the hero of the evening.

Apple toddy and hoecake were handed around now. And when these had been disposed of, general dancing commenced.

There was not room enough in this large cabin for the time-honored Christmas dance, the Virginia reel, but there were jigs, waltzes and four-handed reels. Every woman wanted Si for a partner. So in turn he danced with every woman in the room.

They kept up the revels until early morning. They had no clock to warn them of the flight of time. So in their enjoyment of their favorite pastimes, music and dancing, eating and drinking, they forgot it! It was not until cock-crow, throughout all the henhouses and barnyards of the neighborhood, announced to them that a new day had dawned, that they agreed to separate, wishing each other "Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

"JIM."

A beautiful and happy girl,
With heart as light as summer air,
And fresh young lip and brow of pearl,
Shadowed by many a careless curl,
Of unconfined and flowing hair.—WHITTIER.

When Col. Pryor had dismissed Si, and had locked the front door after him, he returned to the room where he had left Temima. He found that the girl had removed

her wraps and had settled herself luxuriously in the arm-chair before the fire, with her feet on the fender.

The light of the candles on the mantel, as well as the flame from the fire on the hearth, shone on as beautiful a form and as fascinating a face as ever Nat Pryor had gazed upon. She was about fifteen years old, and well developed for her age. Her form was large and perfectly proportioned. Her head was finely shaped, and was covered with glossy, light red, curling hair, that encircled a broad, full, white forehead. Her complexion was very fair. Her eyebrows were delicately drawn, and her eyes were so peculiar in their beauty that they were the most attractive feature in her charming face. They were large and so heavily shaded by long, thick eyelashes, that no one, at a glance, could see their color, except when she opened them very wide, which she had a rather startling habit of doing. Then one could see that those wonderful eyes were of shining amber color, with big, black pupils. They were certainly very beautiful, magnetic and fascinating orbs! Her nose was a decided pug, giving her countenance a somewhat mocking, defiant, mischievous expression. Her lips were full and well shaped. She had—if I may so describe it—a large, beautiful, red mouth. Her chin was strong. She wore a suit of dark blue merino, with white collar and cuffs.

"Well, my dear," said the colonel, drawing a chair and seating himself near her.

"Well? I do not think it is well at all! What have you to say why the sentence of death should not be pronounced upon you?" she demanded.

"Oh! Ah! May it please the court, I have not yet heard what crime has been laid to my charge, nor been allowed an opportunity to defend myself," solemnly replied the colonel. "Therefore I would pray the court that sentence be suspended."

"You ought to be suspended yourself!" exclaimed Jim, opening her eyes wide upon him. "Do you know, sir, that if that good, old negro had not chanced to be at the station, and taken pity on me, I should have had to sit on my trunks outdoors all this bitter winter night, and might have been found frozen to death to-morrow morning?"

"Good Heaven, child! You make my blood curdle!

Stop chaffing, Jim, and tell me all about it! You cannot think I would have neglected to meet you myself if I had known of your coming. Why, I should have been delighted to do so, and delighted to have you. I thought you were a fixture at the Georgetown Convent, which has been your home ever since the death of your mother," said the colonel, with emotion he could scarcely control.

"Then you did not get the major's letter?" inquired the girl.

"What letter?" demanded the colonel, raising his eyebrows.

"The letter the major wrote to you last week, asking you to receive me, and announcing his marriage."

"Great Cæsar! Silas married again!" exclaimed the colonel, in amazement.

"Well, yes! rather! He has wedded a wealthy widow, without children, and who does not like children; therefore, while they have gone off to Arizona, where the major has been ordered to take command of Fort Protection, I am packed off to you for an indefinite term; and this without anyone consulting your pleasure or convenience in the matter, as it now seems to me," concluded Jemima, with a sigh.

"Not so, my dear girl! Not so! You are my only sister's only child! Motherless! Ay, fatherless, too, for all practical purposes," added the colonel, under his breath. "And I love you as my own daughter, Jemima! Surely you must know how often I have written to your father, and begged him to let you come and spend your holidays with me? And few events could have made me so happy as to have had you with me. But he would never let you come. Have you left school finally now, my love?"

"Oh, yes, Uncle Nat. Having had no vacations, and no outside distractions, I made rather rapid progress in my studies, and graduated sooner than most girls of my age; at the June commencement, last summer. Then I still remained at the convent as a parlor boarder, until the major's marriage and departure for the West. Then I was sent here, as you see."

"Well, my darling, you shall never regret coming to me. Henceforth you are the mistress of your widowed

uncle's house. Ah! here comes my—your housekeeper, my dear," he added, as a middle-aged, colored woman entered the room.

She was short, stout and black, and was dressed in a gay tartan plaid gown, and white cambric turban and neckerchief. Jemima had taken the hand of her uncle, pressed it to her lips, and was holding it fondly to her heart, when he spoke to the newcomer:

"Druse, this young lady is my niece, Miss Abbace. She has come to stay, and will take her position here as mistress."

Druse had courtesied when she came into the room, courtesied when the colonel began to speak, and again when he finished. Then the colonel turned to Jemima and said:

"Now, my dear, give your orders, and Druse will make you comfortable. I have a party of gentlemen in the big parlor, who came to spend the evening with me. I must go to them; but as soon as they go away I will return to you."

"Oh, do not let me detain you, dear, good uncle. Go to your guests at once! I shall do very well. And I thank you for the warm welcome you have given me," said Jemima, with tears dimming the splendor of her eyes.

Col. Pryor folded her in his arms, and kissed her fondly, and then with some emotion turned and left the room.

As soon as she was alone with the old housekeeper, whom she feared might consider herself supplanted, Jemima turned, and with a smile said:

"My dear uncle is very kind to wish to make me of so much importance in the establishment, but I shall interfere very little with your management, Aunt Druse. For you must know that I am quite ignorant of housekeeping, while you, I presume—indeed, I know—must have faithfully filled your responsible position of housekeeper here for more years than I have lived."

"Well, yes, youn' mist'ess, I reckon so. An' to de bes' ob my 'bility," replied the woman.

"Well, Aunt Druse, I will only trouble you now to get me a cup of tea and show me to my room."

"Yes, young mist'ess. Yo' set yere an' make yo'se'f

comfo'ble, w'ile I goes an' 'tens ter things," said Druse. Then, glancing around the room, she saw an old book lying on the side table, which she took up and brought to the girl, saying:

"Here, honey! here's a book wiv mitey good readin' in it, I reckon. Yo' kin 'muse yo'se'f 'long ob it w'ile I'm gone."

Druse left the room, and Jemima took up the book. It must have been a highly interesting book to farmers, for it treated of "Stock Raising in All Its Branches." Jemima looked at the pictures of famous cattle: horses, pigs and sheep, et cetera, with little interest, until the door opened, and Druse came in with a tablecloth over her arm, followed by a young black boy, carrying in his hands a large waiter laden with tea, bread, butter, cakes and sweetmeats.

"Dis yere boy is my son, young mist'ess. An' a moughty good-fer-nuffin' lad he is, too," said Druse, who held that to depreciate young people was the surest way to their moral improvement.

"Now, Otto, doane yer try ter bow wiv dat waiter in yo' han', or yo'll drop it on de flo," cautioned Druse, as the boy was endeavoring to hold his burden within his left arm, while he pulled his front hair, in obeisance, with his right hand.

Druse drew out the table, laid the cloth, took the tray from the boy, and arranged the edibles on the board.

"By de time yo's done, de fire will make yo' bedroom warm as a toas'. So now, young mist'ess, yo' set down an 'joy yo'se'f. Otto done make you a fire. But, Lor', he aine no 'count to nobody, nohow," added Druse, as she set the empty tray up against the side of the chimney.

Jemima looked with interest upon the boy. He was a child of about eleven or twelve years of age, slim and black. He was by no means depressed or mortified by his depreciation, for his eyes were shining with mirth, and he was grinning from ear to ear. But Jim herself had been "no account to nobody" for so many years that she quite sympathized with this little black brother in humiliation.

"Come here, Otto," she said, smiling on him.

He came up to her, pulling his front hair and bobbing his head vigorously by way of salutation.

"Are you really such a good-for-nothing boy?"

"I kin tote wood, an' fotch water, an' wait on de table, an' play on de banjo, young mist'ess," replied the lad.

"Then I think you are a very useful and entertaining boy," said the young lady.

"Now, p'ease set down, an' drink yo' tea, 'fo' it git col', young mist'ess," said Druse, who did not approve of this conversation.

Jemima complied, and seated herself at the table; but as she partook of the delicacies before her, she frequently turned to speak to Otto, who stood grinning and watching her with adoring eyes.

After she had finished a hearty supper, for which her long, cold journey had given her an appetite, she filled Otto's hands with cakes, which he eagerly thrust into his pockets, for fear his mother should take them away from him, and bobbed his head with thanks all the time.

"Now, Aunt Druse, if you will show me the way, I will go to bed. Do you know that, although I am my Uncle Nat's only niece, I have never been in this house before?"

"See dat, now! Sich a shame! But, of course, I do kno' it, chile! Ef yo'd ebber been here afore I'd have seed yo'. Come 'long o' me, honey! Otto, you mis'able cre'ter, yo' put all dem dere fings offen de table on ter de waiter, an' fol' up de tableclof; and shake it fus', an' doane yo' break nuffin'," ordered Druse, as she took one of the candles and led the way from the room.

She conducted Jemima up the broad, front staircase to a broad, upper hall, with doors on each side leading into bedrooms. She opened the last one on the right-hand side, and showed Jemima into a spacious front chamber, directly over the long parlor, and corresponding to it in size and shape. At the furthest side of the room, and opposite the door by which they had entered, was a broad fireplace, in which was burning a fine hickory wood fire, supported by brass andirons, and protected by a high brass fender. A rag rug lay before the clean, red hearth. A similar rug lay beside the bed. The room was fitted up entirely in white, according to the custom of the time and place. The walls were whitewashed, the floor was bare but for the rugs; the three front windows, the high-post bedstead, the dressing table, and even the easy-chairs were

all draped with white dimity. But for the glorious fire it would have been a chilly-looking chamber. Jemima's trunk stood against the wall, with her two handboxes upon it.

Jemima, very tired, threw herself into the white easy-chair before the fire, and handing the key of her trunk to Druse, asked her to get out a nightdress.

While the weary girl reclined in her seat she noticed what she had not seen before, because they were painted white as the walls were, namely, two closets in the two recesses on the sides of the chimney.

"In place of the wardrobes of more modern houses," she said to herself, "I can hang up my clothes in them to-morrow."

Druse brought the required garments, and then said:

"If yo' p'ease, young mist'ess, I'll unpack yer things fo' yo' an' hang 'em up."

"No, not to-night, thank you. I know, from what I heard my uncle say, that you are all keeping Christmas Eve down at the quarters. I will detain you no longer. You can go at once, and I will just sit here before this fire, and wait until my uncle comes to bid me good-night," said the girl, pushing her bright curls away from the broad forehead, exposing full temples, which a phrenologist would have called abnormally developed bumps of mirthfulness—her inheritance from the Pryors—but which were not in an active state to-night.

"Now, look here, young mist'ess, doane yo' set up fo' Marse Nat! Ef yo' do yo'll jis' set up all night! Dem ge'men aine gwine ter let ole marse off 'fo' mornin', an' dis Ch'ismas Ebe, too! Yo' jis' go ter bed, an' le' me go down an' tell ole marse as yo' was tired—an' so yo' is—an' has gone ter bed. He'll be glad, 'cause it will 'lieve him ob 'barrassmen', an' likewise oneasiness on yo' 'count."

"You are right, Druse! I will go to rest. You go bid my uncle good-night for me. And good-night to you, and a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, Druse."

"De same ter yo', young mist'ess! An' many ob dem," replied the housekeeper, as she left the room.

But Jemima did not retire immediately. She took her

prayer book from her satchel, knelt beside the easy-chair, and said the Litany of the Infant Jesus, the office of the hour.

CHAPTER XXV.

JEMIMA ABBACE.

It was about ten o'clock when young Oliver Pryor returned home from Horah Hall. Passing by the negro quarters, and seeing the lighted cabins, and hearing the sound of music and dancing, he rightly judged that all the colored folks were assembled there, keeping high festival, and that there was no one at the house to take his horse; so he rode his rough-shod pony round to the stables, and rubbed him down well, and fed and put him up. Then he walked on to the house, and knocked. His father opened the door.

"Had a pleasant evening, Noll?" he inquired, cheerfully.

"Splendid! I left the ladies still up, waiting for the arrival of Murdok. I did not care to stay and receive the young gentlemen, myself, though," Oliver replied, as he drew off his overcoat and hung it on the rack.

The colonel did not tell him that there would be no arrival of Murdok at Horah Hall that night, nor did he mention the unexpected arrival of Jemima Abbace. That news would keep until the next day, he thought, and afford a pleasant surprise for Christmas morning.

"I say, young marse! they are having a high old time down there at the quarters, aren't they?" exclaimed Noll.

Nat Pryor doubled up and laughed as he thought of the prize pipe joke, and then said:

"There, go to bed, Noll! I have some gentlemen here, and they mean to stay all night, I verily believe! Good-night, my boy! Merry Christmas to you!"

"Same to you, and many of 'em, dad! Good-night!" responded the youth, as he took the candle from his father and ran upstairs to his den.

As he passed the door of the best spare room, he saw a light shining through the keyhole, but he only thought

that a fire had been kindled in it in case any of the gentlemen should decide to sleep at the house. He had not the faintest suspicion that his cousin, Jemima, who was, in fact, but a myth to his apprehension, was domiciled therein.

It is necessary to say a few more words concerning Jemima to make her position clear.

Jemima was the only surviving child of Col. Pryor's sister, between whom and himself there had existed a bond of affection knit all the closer because they were the only children of their parents. The latter died when the son was just twenty-one years old, and had left him sole guardian of the daughter, who was but fifteen years of age. He had devoted himself to this young sister until her marriage to Lieut. Silas Abbace, who had just graduated from the Military Academy at West Point. The young officer, having no influence in high official circles whereby to receive an appointment to Washington, New York, or some other choice post, where his most arduous duties would consist of leading the german in fashionable halls, or dancing attendance in high official anterooms, was naturally ordered off to a frontier fort in the far West, to be scalped by the Indians, or enervated by malaria.

He took his bride with him to this forbidding post of duty, where the next year their first child, Jemima, was born, and where, five years later, his young wife, and their second child, a boy, died of "the fever."

Then the captain, for such was his rank at the time of his bereavement, got a six months' leave, and returned to the East, bringing his motherless girl with him. He had but one female relative in the world, an aunt, who was a nun in the Convent of the Visitation at Georgetown.

To this *religieuse* he committed the care of his child, with the understanding that she should be brought up in the Catholic faith, and, if in after years she should develop any inclination for a conventual life, she should be given up to the service of that life.

At the expiration of his leave, Capt. Abbace returned to the frontier, and there he remained for the next ten years; not at the same post, however, for he was fre-

quently changed from one to another, and had served at all the posts, from Oregon to Arizona.

Meantime his little daughter grew toward womanhood. No undue influence, however, was brought to bear upon her to direct her inclinations to a conventual life.

Jemima developed no desire for a devout life. Quite the contrary! But she was a faithful student, and progressed rapidly in her studies. As soon as she was able to write, her first letter was written to her father, who was then in Oregon. And, from that time, for about a year, the father and daughter corresponded regularly. The novelty of corresponding with his little daughter pleased him for a short time; but after that its interest seemed to wane. His answers to her letters became shorter, and then they became intermittent, irregular, occasional, and finally dropped to only two or three a year, as on Christmas and birthdays. The girl, too, was beginning to lose her interest in her father, whose image was fading from her memory, and who was so forgetful or neglectful of her letters. And less and less frequently she troubled herself to write.

But, if her father almost entirely ignored her existence, her uncle did not. Every time business called Nat Pryor to Washington, he took occasion to go to the convent to see his niece—"his dear, dead sister's motherless daughter," as he pathetically called her. And every June he would write to his brother-in-law, to beg that she might be permitted to spend her midsummer holidays with him at The Notches. And every December he would petition for her presence at his home for Christmas.

But the petitions were never granted, not even after the death of the child's great-aunt, for whose sake she had been left at the convent. So the dreariest portions of the year to the poor girl were the holidays, when all her schoolmates were gone to their homes. Even after she had graduated, the summer before her appearance at The Notches, she had been left through all the season as a parlor boarder at the institution. Only early in the December following had her father appeared suddenly in Washington, and announced to his daughter his impending marriage to the wealthy Widow Wilkins, and took her from the convent to act as bridesmaid to her step-

mother, and then dispatched her to her Uncle Nat Pryor, while he and his bride went off to the West.

* * * * * * *

On that same Christmas Eve, long after Oliver Pryor had left the house, Isabel Horah sat up waiting for the arrival of her son, Murdok.

The wainscoted back parlor was the picture of ideal domestic comfort. The open fire of hickory logs blazed upon the broad hearth, and lighted up the warm walls and crimson curtains of the room. A chandelier hung from the center of the ceiling and illuminated an elegant tea table that stood under it, covered with a snow-white damask cloth, adorned with a silver service and Sevres china, and laden with all the delicacies for that meal, except the dishes that were waiting in the kitchen to be served hot.

Isabel Horah reclined in her crimson easy-chair on the right side of the chimney, with Zenobia seated on a hassock at her feet—a favorite position for the young girl in her idle moments; for, as all the household said, "she doted on her adopted mother."

Gilbert Godfrey sat nearer the table, where the light of the chandelier could fall upon his book, for he was reading aloud to his companions.

Suddenly the tall, old-fashioned clock that stood in the corner of the parlor, reaching from floor to ceiling, "whirred" with startling preparation and slowly struck eleven. As suddenly Mrs. Horah threw down her knitting, and sprang to her feet, exclaiming:

"Excuse me, Mr. Godfrey, but I cannot listen any longer."

The young man instantly closed his book, and looked very much concerned.

"Murdok should have been here two hours ago! I am sure some accident must have happened either to the train or to the sleigh," she added, going to the front window, and drawing aside the curtains and trying to peer out into the darkness.

"I hope and trust not, madam! But if you will allow

me, I will saddle a horse and ride down to the station to inquire," suggested the young man.

"Oh, would you? Would you? You are so kind! I should not have dreamed of asking such a favor. On such a night, too! And for such a distance! It is too, too selfish in me to accept your kind offer! But, oh, Mr. Godfrey, I am consumed with anxiety!" she said, wringing her hands.

"Don't speak of it, my dear lady. I hope you know that I would do much more than this to oblige you. I can take the bay horse, which was rough shod by the blacksmith to-day. The ride will be safe," said the young man, as he rose and prepared for his midnight journey through the snow.

He had to go to the stables and saddle the horse for himself, as all the negroes here, as elsewhere, with the exception of Servia, who had no taste for such revels, were gathered in their quarters, keeping Christmas Eve; though with nothing like the enthusiasm that characterized the merrymaking at The Notches, for they missed Uncle Si and his banjo.

He took the astonished bay horse, who could not imagine why he should be disturbed at this unprecedented hour of the night, and showed his disapprobation by snorting and laying back his ears like spikes. He saddled the animal, led him from the stable, and mounted him and rode off as rapidly as the slippery road would allow, in the direction of the "Halfdown" station, to which Si had been sent that morning to meet or wait for Mr. Murdok Horah.

CHAPTER XXVI.

TROUBLE AT HORAH HALL.

Meanwhile Isabel Horah remained in the parlor, but could not keep quiet. She walked up and down the floor, wringing her hands and occasionally giving expression to her feelings in ejaculations of wild conjecture.

"Oh, I know, I know some terrible accident has hap-

pened! A collision on the railroad, or a fall of the sleigh over some precipice!"

"No, no, dearest mamma! Nothing evil has happened! Do not think so! I have been praying to the Holy Virgin, who has a heart full of divine compassion for distressed mothers, to comfort and protect you. And she is true! so no grief can come to you!"

"Chut! chut! You make me sick with your superstitions!" impatiently exclaimed the lady. She did not often speak angrily to her adopted daughter, of whom she was really very fond, but her nerves were now extremely irritable from the long, intense strain of anxiety.

Zenobia made no reply, but looked at the lady with eyes full of tender pity. Mrs. Horah met that look and was melted by it.

"Child!' she said, in a kindlier tone, "have all my careful teaching and Mr. Godfrey's painstaking been of no avail to rid you of your superstitions?"

"Oh, mamma, it is my holy faith and comfort! If I did not believe in the dear Virgin Mother as I believe in you, and that I could go to her with even my little troubles, I should feel very helpless," said the earnest child.

"You are an idolater, and all our teaching has been in vain," sighed the lady.

Zenobia made no reply. It was very strange that, as young as the child was when she fell into the hands of Mrs. Horah, she had learned the *aves* and *paters* of her rosary, and never omitted to repeat them morning and evening in her native Spanish. The ideal of the Divine Mother had inspired her infantile spirit and had remained with her through all opposing teaching.

Presently they were interrupted by the opening of the hall door, which had not been locked after Mr. Godfrey's departure, and a moment later by the entrance of Celia, who came in smiling and saying:

"Please excuse me, ma'am, but as I was going home from Uncle Seth's, where they had a taffy-pulling, I saw the light and knew you had not retired, and so I made bold to come in to pay my duty to Master Murdok."

"Master Murdok has not returned," said the lady.

The quadroon turned pale as she echoed:

"Not—returned! Please, ma'am, have you any news?"

"No, Celia, none. I am very anxious," said Mrs. Horah, welcoming the sympathy of this woman.

"Oh!" breathed Celia, in a deep, troubled tone. "And what did Uncle Si say when he came back?'

"He has not come back," replied Mrs. Horah.

"Oh, ma'am! what can have happened?" cried Celia, clasping her hands.

"Heaven only knows!"

"Oh, ma'am, would you please allow me to stay and wait at the house here till we hear something?"

"Yes, you can join Servia in the kitchen. She is there, keeping up the fire for a hot supper when he does come."

Celia courtesied and left the room. Mrs. Horah continued to walk distractedly up and down the floor.

The old clock "whirred' again and solemnly struck twelve.

"It is Christmas Day! A Merry Christmas to you, dearest mamma!" exclaimed Zenobia, starting up and running to her benefactress, and kissing and embracing her heartily.

"Child! child! do not mock me!" passionately cried the troubled woman.

"Oh, mamma, be comforted! Nothing has happened! Nothing dreadful, I mean. I know it," confidently affirmed Zenobia.

"You know nothing about it," nervously retorted the lady, dropping into her easy-chair, exhausted from her long, distracted pacing to and fro.

Hour after hour passed. The weary night waned. The first rays of the rising sun reddened the eastern horizon and shot lances of crimson light through the pines that crowned the mountain tops, and into the windows, whose shutters had been left open to welcome the returning son.

Zenobia rose from her seat and extinguished the lights of the chandelier.

"It is certainly time that Mr. Godfrey was back. Oh, what will this day bring forth?" exclaimed Isabel Horah, wringing her hands as she rose from her seat.

Just then the sound of sleigh bells was heard approaching the house.

Mrs. Horah flew to the front door, tore it open, and

was confronted by old Si, who had just jumped from his sleigh and come up the front steps.

"Si! My son! Where is he? What's happened?" breathlessly inquired the distracted woman.

"Nuffen aine happen, mist'ess, on'y Marse Murdok, he nebber comed!"

"Never came! Then what kept you so long?"

Si had his lie ready. He had been making it up all the way from The Notches to Horah Hall.

"Yes, mist'ess, he nebber comed by enny ob de trains w'at stopped dere. No, mist'ess. So w'en de las' comed an' gone, an' he wahne dere, de youn' youf in de ticked offis he see me so dis'p'inted he say how p'rhaps de ge'mman miss de las' way train an' might come by de free-o clock 'spress w'at didn' stop reg'lar dere, but w'at 'ould pull up sometimes to 'com'date a ge'man an' let him jump off safe. But dere wer' a youn' miss come by dat las' chain, w'ich she wer' Marse Co'nel P'yor's niece, an' nobody dere ter meet her! So w'en I knowed dere wer' six hours to wait 'fo' de 'spress 'ould pass, I jis' gib dat young miss a lif' in de sleigh as fer as Marse Co'nel's, an' den dribed back ter de stashun ter be all ready fo' de 'spress. But dat 'spress went by like a flash ob lightnin' an' nebber stop"—"Awful lies, but jus'ifiable in de cause ob peace," Si said to himself.

"Well, thank Heaven, there was no accident!" said Mrs. Horah, who came to the probable conclusion that the irresponsible young man had gone off to spend Christmas with a classmate in some gayer scene than Horah Hall, and had not thought it necessary to inform his mother.

While Si was telling his story, Celia had come silently to the door, where she stood, as pale as death, until he had finished, and then, seemingly relieved, she slipped away.

"Did you say that a niece of Col. Pryor's had come down?" inquired Mrs. Horah, when her maternal anxiety had been somewhat allayed, and had left her mind to think of other matters.

"Yes, mist'ess. An' nobody ter meet her! An' she would a perished in de snow ef it hadn' be'n fer me," said Si, with natural self-complacency.

Mrs. Horah expressed some surprise and curiosity, and then Si told the whole story of his adventure, which lost nothing in the telling.

While they were speaking, the sound of the feet of a galloping horse were heard approaching the house, and soon after the door was opened, and Gilbert Godfrey entered.

"No accident, madam," he hastened to say, before he had noticed Si. "But as the mail came in while I was at the station, I rode on with the postboy to Mistyrock, and waited at the post office until the mail was opened, and have brought you this letter," he added, handing it to the lady.

Mrs. Horah tore open the envelope. It contained but a short note, just telling her what she had already divined —that her son had decided to spend the Christmas holidays with a classmate at his gay city home in Richmond. It was a cruel, depressing disappointment to the widowed mother, yet she made every excuse for her son.

"Horah Hall is very dull," she said to herself, "and the city is gay. It is, therefore, natural that a young man should prefer the pleasures of balls, concerts, plays and the society of young men of his own age and rank to the old manor house and the company of its plain inmates.

So she accepted the situation, though with a heavy, aching heart. She did not go to church that day. Indeed, Isabel Horah never did, in all her troubles, seek the strength and comfort that religious faith might have given her.

In the afternoon Col. Pryor rode over to see her. He was shocked to perceive how ill she looked. She read his feelings in his expression and hastened to explain that she had only lost a little rest and should feel better after a good sleep.

The colonel told her then of the arrival of his niece, and asked her to come and bring Miss de Leon, and see the young girl, expressing the hope that Zenobia and Jenima might become friends.

Mrs. Horah responded languidly, yet sincerely, that she hoped they might.

The colonel soon took leave, saying to himself as he rode off:

"That woman is pining away, and breaking her heart. Ah! it is not good nor wise to set all our affections on one object! To say nothing of its being idolatrous, it is unlucky!"

A day or two after this, Mrs. Horah and Zenobia made a perfunctory visit to The Notches, to call on Miss Abbace; it was perfunctory, at least, on the part of Isabel Horah, whose heart was not in anything she undertook.

Zenobia and Jemima seemed to be attracted to each other from the first moment of their meeting, so that it was soon apparent to all that they would become warm friends. Before the call was over, Mrs. Horah settled on a day when Col. Pryor, Oliver and Jemima should dine and spend an evening at Horah Hall.

This was the commencement of many pleasant interchanges of visits between the families of Horah Hall and The Notches. So the winter passed pleasantly to all except the melancholy mistress of the manor. It seemed as if nothing could rouse her from the deep gloom into which she had sunk. Her health, too, was failing. Everyone interested in her could see that.

The only circumstance that seemed to afford her the least pleasure was the growing attachment between Oliver Pryor and Zenobia. They were both very young—Zenobia, about fourteen; Oliver, about nineteen. Yet there could be no doubt of the depth, sincerity and warmth of their mutual affection. The poor, sad widow watching them thought of *Paul* and *Virginia*, rather than of *Romeo* and *Juliet*, so childlike, open and innocent was their love in all its manifestations.

There was another couple, also, whom she watched with scarcely less interest—Gilbert Godfrey, who had seemed a confirmed old bachelor at twenty-nine, was evidently fascinated by the amber eyes of Jemima Abbace. But he, poor fellow, was a silent and a hopeless lover; for what prospect had he, a poor teacher, of ever being in a position to aspire to the hand of Col. Pryor's niece?

Up to this time he had been fancy free. His only dream of the future had been to lift the heavy mortgage from his paternal acres, and then to return, free of debt, to the home of his youth, to the home that had been in his family ever since the first manor of a thousand acres had been

granted by the first "Lord Proprietary of the Province of Maryland," to the first Gilbert Godfrey who settled in St. Mary's. For this cause he and his brother, Gideon, had leased the Godfrey farm to a good tenant for a term of years; for this cause he labored at teaching at Horah Hall, and his brother at overseeing on their native soil. Every dollar that each could save was devoted to paying the interest, and reducing the principal of this incumbrance.

So the winter blossomed into spring, bringing the blue skies, the green fields and fragrant flowers, and joyous Easter. Isabel Horah had looked forward to this short holiday as the season that would certainly bring her son once more to his home. She even wrote to him to insure his coming, entreating him to come, telling him how long she had pined for his presence, and how distressed she would be if he disappointed her again.

But he wrote back in reply that he was very sorry, but he had promised the same schoolmate, Julius Nesbit, of Richmond, with whom he had spent the Christmas holidays, and who was his dearest friend at college, to accompany him on a fishing expedition down the Chesapeake Bay, which would occupy the whole of Easter week.

Again her maternal love was grievously wounded, but again she sought to find excuses for her selfish son.

"I never had any brothers or male cousins. I know nothing about young men except Murdok. So I ought not to judge him harshly! It cannot be that he does not care for me! Men, I suppose, are not like women. We must not judge them by ourselves. Oh, no! for no daughter would have failed to rush home eagerly for her holidays! And no mother would have neglected poor Jemima Abbace so long as her father did! Oh, men are different!" she mused, reasoning from her own narrow experience.

But repeated disappointments were wearing her out. For will it be believed, term after term ended, vacation after vacation came and went, and Murdok Horah did not come home. He seemed to loathe his quiet home and his country neighbors. He was also very artful in avoiding his home-coming. He would always promise positively that he would come, and always disappoint his

mother at the last moment, when it would be too late for her—had she desired to do so—to go to Charlottesville to fetch him. And the first news she would hear of his change of plan would be a letter from some distance, to inform her that he was spending the vacation with Nesbit, or some other schoolmate.

Thus three years passed away.

Meanwhile, though no word of courtship had passed between Oliver and Zenobia, no thought of marriage had occurred to the youth or the maiden, their mutual devotion was patent to all who were interested in them, and met with great favor from Mrs. Horah and Col. Pryor. Neither the father nor the adopted mother could have desired better fortune for the girl or boy than that they should be united at the proper time.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AT THE OLD UNIVERSITY.

Ah, happy hills! Ah, pleasing shade!
  Ah, fields beloved in vain,
Where once my careless footsteps strayed,
  A stranger yet to pain,
I feel the gales that from you blow,
A momentary bliss bestow,
  As waving fresh their gladsome wing,
My weary soul to soothe,
And redolent of joy and youth,
  To breathe a second spring!—GRAY.

To the widowed mother, hungering for the presence of her only son, the midsummer vacation of the third year was now the great bourne of desire and anticipation. Then her dear "boy," as she still called the young man, would come home for a long, blessed, delightful visit to spend the three months' holiday. He had promised most positively to do so.

But on the expected occasion she did not intend to await his arrival at Horah Hall, but to go to Charlottesville to attend the annual commencement of the university, as all parents and guardians were expected to do. So, when

the time drew near she wrote to Murdok, announcing her intention, fondly believing that the information would give him pleasure.

He wrote back "All right!"

Then Mrs. Horah invited Jemima Abbace to stay with Zenobia at the Hall during her absence. Then, attended by Celia, she set out for Charlottesville, where she arrived early in the evening and put up at the best family hotel and dispatched a messenger for Murdok.

He came late, and was at once shown up to his mother's room, where he found her in her wrapper, reclining on a resting-chair, looking very pale, wan and weary—and attended by Celia, who stood behind her, combing out her long, red-gold hair, which was now beginning to be freely tinged with silver.

"Oh, Murdok, I am so glad to see you!" she exclaimed, bursting into tears of joy, as she rose and clasped him to her heart.

"You should not have taken the trouble and fatigue of this long journey, mother. There was no necessity for it," he said, as he kissed her in a perfunctory manner, and let her slip from his arms into her chair, where she lay back exhausted.

Then Celia came around to him with more than an old nurse's gushing emotion, and, seeming to see nothing but her foster child in the stalwart, young man before her, she suddenly clasped him in her arms, and would have kissed him on his mustached mouth, if he had not rudely and angrily shaken her off, exclaiming:

"Don't be a cursed fool, woman! You forget yourself!"

Celia "collapsed" and shrank back again behind her mistress' chair, where she stood scowling darkly, while a sinister and even a threatening expression settled on her sullen face.

Murdok drew a chair backward toward them, struck it sharply upon the floor, sat down saddlewise astride it, crossed his arms upon the chair back, leaned his chin upon them, and thus faced his mother and her attendant.

Mrs. Horah had not seen her son for nearly three years. Now she looked at him with interest not unmixed with uneasiness. He was changed more than the interval

of time seemed to explain, and not changed for the better. He had been a lovely infant, a beautiful boy, a handsome youth, but now he was scarcely good-looking. He had grown a little taller, and a great deal broader. He was bullet-headed and bull-necked, with a dense growth of closely curling black hair and beard—the latter too thickly grown for a young man of his age—and which, taken together with a rather low forehead, short, unhandsome nose and prominent lips, seemed to suggest no remoter descent from the ape than the laws of evolution are said to allow. His eyes were large, black and shadowed by such long, thick lashes, and hung over by such heavy, lowering brows, as to give them a sly, surly, forbidding expression.

He was dressed flashily, in an evening suit of black summer cloth, which, in itself, was well enough; but he wore a large diamond pin in his necktie, diamond studs in his shirt front, diamond sleeve buttons, and a diamond solitaire ring on his finger, and a heavy watch chain across his vest.

A few years ago a man so dressed and bedizened appearing in a public place would have been "shadowed" as a suspicious character. Now, however, the police know that many of the members of the "fast set" dress modestly, like theological students or country clergymen, during business hours.

Mrs. Horah thought him overdressed, and looked at him with unwilling and involuntary disapprobation; she hated so much to criticise her idol, even in silence. But Celia thought him the most magnificent creature she had ever seen. She gazed at him with admiration strangely mingled with mortification.

After some desultory talk, in which Mrs. Horah had asked many questions in regard to Murdok's health, studies and amusements, and had received answers more satisfactory than reliable; and, after she, in her turn, had been questioned as to what was going on at Horah Hall, The Notches and Mistyrock, and had replied by giving a true and complete account of all of interest that had happened in her neighborhood for the past year, Murdok rose and said:

"Well, mother, I can't stay any longer to-night! You

ought to go to bed, and I must return to my room, and read hard for the examination, or I may be plucked."

"Yes, go, my dear boy; but don't sit up all night. Life and health, after all, are more precious and valuable than collegiate honors. But before you go, do tell me who is this Mr. Julius Nesbit, with whom you have formed such an intimate friendship? I forgot to ask you before."

"Oh, he's just a splendid fellow—the son of Judge Nesbit, of Richmond," exclaimed Murdok, with more enthusiasm than he often chose to waste on any subject.

"In that case, my dear, since he has had you at his father's house for the Christmas holidays, and on his yacht at Easter week, you must invite him to stay with you at Horah Hall this summer. Bring him here and introduce him to me, and I will second and press your invitation."

Murdok's face clouded. She noticed it, and could not imagine why it should darken so. But her son, and men in general because of him, were getting to be more and more a puzzle to Isabel Horah. Before she could ask him if he did not like the proposal—and if not, why?—he suddenly exclaimed:

"We will think about it, mother. Good-night," and hurried from the room.

When he was gone, Celia, with more sympathy, tenderness and discretion than she usually displayed, refrained from remarks, and helped her mistress to prepare for bed, gave her a sleeping draught, and silently withdrew to the corner of the room, where her little cot bed had been temporarily stretched.

The next few days saw crowds of people from all parts of the State, and from other parts of the country, pouring into the town to witness the ceremonies of the commencement at the old university. Mrs. Horah had been so long a recluse that she kept out of the way of the multitude with morbid sensitiveness.

Murdok, however, brought his friend Julius Nesbit to the hotel parlor the next evening to see his mother.

"Birds of a feather flock together," may be true of birds, and also in regard to those men to whom it is often applied. Yet it is sometimes seen that men of the most opposite temperaments are superficially attracted to

each other, until a more intimate, mutual knowledge proves them to be utterly unsuited. So it seemed to be now with Murdok and young Nesbit. Externally they were opposites. Murdok was dark, short, stout and flashily dressed. Nesbit, tall, thin, fair and plainly clothed.

Isabel Horah was very much pleased with her son's friend. She expressed her thanks to him for his hospitality to Murdok, and begged him to give her son and herself the happiness of his company at Horah Hall for the summer.

The young man thanked her very courteously, and expressed his regrets that previous engagements precluded the possibility of such a visit. After a short conversation he took his leave, seeing that his hostess was fatigued.

The next day Nesbit's father, the judge, arrived in town. He took a room in the same hotel where Mrs. Horah was stopping. In the evening, while the lady was in the general parlor, young Nesbit brought his father up and introduced him to Mrs. Horah. He was a tall, fair, thin man, with silver hair and beard, as if prematurely whitened, for, except this, there was no sign of age about him. Mrs. Horah was more pleased with him than she had been with his son, and thanked Heaven in her heart for having raised up such friends to her "boy." To the father she also expressed her gratitude for his kindness to her son.

He replied that nothing gave him or his family more pleasure than to be useful to Mr. Murdok Horah. He did not add, nor did she suspect, that their efforts had been to win the young man from the evil companions whose society he sought in the town.

The evening was warm and close. The parlor was crowded with visitors; therefore Mrs. Horah was glad when the judge bowed and left her free to retire without discourtesy.

The commencement at the university passed off very much as such ceremonies do at other educational institutions of the same rank. A few embryo statesmen, divines, authors, et cetera, who had finished their collegiate course, took high honors. Among these was young Julius Nesbit, who was destined for the bar. Murdok

Horah did not distinguish himself, nor did he ignominiously fail. The "dons" let him down easy.

On the last evening there was an entertainment given by the students, at which all the visitors were present. Even Mrs. Horah looked in upon the assembly for a little while.

The next day there was a great exodus from Charlottesville, of professors, teachers, students and visitors. But Mrs. Horah, Murdok and young Nesbit remained.

Mrs. Horah was anxious to get home, for she was ill, weak and weary. But she fancied that Murdok was staying from the love of his friend's society, and would not wish to leave until Julius Nesbit should start. So she said nothing about going.

After two days had passed in waiting and doubt, Murdok suddenly inquired, on the morning of the third day:

"Well, mother, when do you think of starting for home?"

"Just as soon as you please, my dear. But are you quite ready?" she eagerly inquired.

"Well, the fact is, I am not going down to the old Hall this summer," he replied, with some hesitation.

"Not?" It was but one word—one syllable—but fraught with so much disappointment that Murdok hastened to exclaim:

"Oh, come now, mother. The old Hall is an awfully slow, old place. I should be bored to death in a week. And when a fellow has a holiday, why in the mischief can't he enjoy it, instead of going into a musty old hermitage like Horah Hall?'

"What are you going to do with yourself, Murdok?" she inquired.

"Nesbit and myself have arranged to go on a tour of the lakes and the St. Lawrence River. The arrangement was concluded before you came. So it is settled, you see."

"And will you be back in time to visit the Hall before your return to the university?" she sadly inquired.

"How can I tell? I never was there—I mean, I never took that Northern tour before, nor did Nesbit. So we do not exactly know. Now I have to go to my room,

and pack up. But I will stay to see you off before I start for the North."

"You need not take the trouble," she said, speaking coldly to him for the first time in her life. "Celia can do all that is necessary."

"All right," replied the young man, and he went out about his own business.

Mrs. Horah called Celia, and gave her orders to pack up. At noon of that day Mrs. Horah set out on her return home. Murdok, however, accompanied by his friend, did see her off, and on the train; and, in a momentary relenting at the sight of her pale face, he said that if he and Nesbit should finish their tour in time he would try to make a flying visit to the old place, just to take a look at it before he returned to the university.

"I am afraid your mother wanted you to go home with her," suggested Nesbit, as they walked away from the station, after seeing the train start.

"Oh, no, not she. And if you only knew what a poky old place the old Hall is, and what a poky old lot the people are, you wouldn't wonder that I prefer a pleasure tour to going home," replied Murdok.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Horah, seated in the rushing railway train, drew her thick veil over her face to hide the tears she could not keep back. She broke the journey at a small station on the route, and put up at the little inn for the night. As there were no means of letting the inmates of Horah Hall know of her approach in time to send a carriage to Halfdown Junction, she telegraphed to the inn at Mistyrock for the proprietor to send a hack to meet her at the noon train. The next morning she resumed her journey, and finally reached Horah Hall at sunset that day.

She took the little household completely by surprise.

"Oh, mamma! Why did you not write to let us know? We would have gone to meet you in the carriage. And instead, you have had to come in that rickety old hack!" said Zenobia, who had rushed out to receive her.

"My dear, I should have done so, but I overstayed my time, and finally started at a moment's notice, as I may say," replied the lady.

Then she followed the girl into the back room, where she found Jemima and Oliver.

The warm, joyous welcome of the young people was as a balm to her bruised heart. Their evening meal was over, but fresh tea was made for her, and they all waited on her with affectionate zeal, not allowing the servants to do anything. With rare tact they refrained from asking any questions until she was rested and refreshed. Then Zenobia, fearing that continued forbearance might be mistaken for indifference, and wound the mother's jealous heart, inquired:

"Where is Murdok? And when is he coming home?"

"He has gone with his friend Mr. Nesbit to make an extended tour. He hopes to be with us later in the summer," was the somewhat evasive reply.

No more questions were asked. Oliver Pryor spent the night at Horah Hall. The next morning Oliver asked that old Si might drive his cousin over to The Notches in the buggy, as he himself had only his saddle horse on which he had ridden to the Hall on the previous day. Mrs. Horah begged that he would remain a few days longer. But Oliver urged that his father was very lonely, and had missed them "awfully." So the lady had no more to say, but told him to give what orders he liked at the stables, while she drew a painful comparison between Oliver's consideration for his father and Murdok's indifference to herself.

The leave-taking of the young people was affectionate, and was only saved from being sorrowful by their mutual assurances of eternal friendship and repeated meetings.

When Oliver and Jemima had gone, affairs at the Hall settled down into their usual routine. The summer waned. Isabel Horah became paler, thinner and weaker. Now she had a slight, hacking cough, with a little afternoon fever, accompanied by two red spots in the center of her hollow cheeks, but her eyes were clearer than ever.

Nat Pryor, who, from having been her devoted, though disappointed lover, had become her faithful friend, vainly urged her to consult a physician. She assured him that there was no necessity for such, that there was nothing the matter with her, and that she should be quite well when the enervating summer heats were over, and so on.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"HOPE DEFERRED."

Thou lack'st not Friendship's spell-word, nor
The half unconscious power to draw
All hearts to thine by Love's sweet law.
With these good gifts of God is cast
Thy lot, and many a charm thou hast
To hold the blessed angels fast.—WHITTIER.

September came, and with it Murdok suddenly appeared at the Hall. It happened that Zenobia was spending the day with Jemima at The Notches. Mrs. Horah received him alone. Hearing his voice in the hall, near her parlor door, she ran out in delight at his unlooked-for arrival, and caught him in her arms, welcoming him with tears, smiles and inarticulate words of endearment.

"So you have come home in time to spend a fortnight with us before you return to the university," she said at last, gazing fondly in his face.

"Well—no," he slowly replied, as he drew off his duster, threw it on a chair and dropped himself into another. "The fact is, I do not propose to go back to the university at all."

"Murdok!" she exclaimed, in sorrowful surprise and foreboding.

"Oh, mother, I am tired of colleges and professors and humbugs! I want to see the world! Nesbit is going to start for Europe on the tenth of this month, and I have agreed to go with him. Our passages are engaged, and—well, I only ran down here to say good-by."

"When do you leave here—this neighborhood, I mean?" faintly inquired Mrs. Horah.

"Let's see. This is Friday. I must leave on Monday. The steamer *Europa* sails on Wednesday."

"And how long do you expect to be gone, Murdok!"

"Oh, only about a year. We calculate to spend the autumn in England and Scotland, the first part of the winter in Paris and the last in Rome, and stay and see the carnival; then travel all over the Continent and see all that's to be seen."

"A year!" she murmured to herself, and then for the first time, perhaps, she realized the precarious condition of her own health, and the uncertainty as to whether she should live to see her son's return.

"I am not well, Murdok," she softly said.

"Why, mother, I never saw you look so well in all my life! You are just blooming! Your eyes are like stars, and your cheeks are like roses!" he declared, very sincerely, for he mistook the signs of fever for those of health.

She only smiled in reply.

"And say! Have you anything to eat? I am hungry as a hawk!"

Mrs. Horah touched the bell; and Brush, who had opened the front door for his young master a few minutes before, and was still lingering in the hall, answered it. Mrs. Horah gave her orders for a repast to be laid in that room.

Murdok left his chair, and stretched himself at full length upon the lounge, and waited impatiently while Brush set the table, and brought in cold meats, bread, pastry, cakes and fruit; and, lastly, a pot of coffee.

"Take that slop away and bring me a bottle of brandy, and a plate of broken ice," commanded Murdok, as he rose and yawned, and seated himself at the table.

Brush took up the coffeepot, and left the room in silence; but when he got outside he relieved his feelings by vigorously shaking his head. But he soon reappeared with the brandy and ice, and Murdok fell to and made an enormous meal. He had just finished, and Brush had just cleared away the table, when there was a loud knock at the front door.

"That is Zenobia," exclaimed Mrs. Horah.

Brush hurried to open the door, and then the clear, sweet voice of the girl was heard within, speaking to some one:

"Well, good-night again, Oliver, since you cannot come in. Do not forget your promise."

The reply from without could not be heard. Then the door was closed and locked, and the dancing step and singing voice came down the hall, and Zenobia entered the back parlor, where the mother and son sat. Just within

the door she suddenly stopped, and stood still in astonishment. She had not seen Murdok for so long a time, and he was so changed by his black beard and broadened form that at first she failed to recognize him.

He looked up and saw before him a vision of beautiful young girlhood, such as he had never seen or dreamed of.

"This is Murdok, my love! come home at last, to give us a pleasant surprise!" said Mrs. Horah, by way of breaking the spell of silence.

"Why, Zena!" cried the young man, starting to his feet, "this is never my little Zena, grown into such a beauty!"

And before she was aware he had seized her in his arms, and was kissing her lovely face again and again.

Startled, ashamed and indignant, the girl struggled away from him as soon as she could, and then, flushing, shaking, panting, she said:

"May I say good-night, mamma? You will want him all to yourself this evening." And, without waiting for permission, she hurried away from the room, and plunged her head into a basin of water, and washed her face over and over again with streaming tears as well as with the fresh water.

"Oh, what would Oliver say!" she exclaimed, as she sank into a chair and dried her face on a towel. "What would Oliver think? Oh, how I do hate that Murdok! How I hate him! I will ask mamma to let me go over to The Notches and stay with Jemima until he goes away again! But I do not know how I will ever look Jemima in the face again! And, as to Oliver! Oh!" she cried and sobbed until she had exhausted her emotion, and then she took up her rosary, a present from Jemima, and whispered to herself: "I will tell Mother Mary!"

All this distress at having been heartily kissed by a young man with whom she had been brought up might appear to be absurd and exaggerated, but it must be remembered what a shy, dainty, proud little lady Zenobia had been from her infancy; how even in her babyhood, if anyone wished to kiss her, she had offered her dainty little hand—or, as a most precious favor, her red cheek. She had been so taught from her early infancy, and under the care of Mrs. Horah she had never been accustomed to

those rude games of forfeits so popular in some neighborhoods. Therefore she felt insulted and humiliated. And she felt as if her dear, devoted, true Oliver, who loved, adored and worshiped her with all his heart and soul and life, but who caressed her only with his eyes—his tender, eloquent eyes—was as deeply outraged as herself.

She could not bear to think of the insult, as she felt it to be. She tried to turn her thoughts from the subject, but it held them like a vise. She offered up her evening prayers and thanksgivings in a mechanical and perfunctory manner. She went to bed, but could not sleep. The thought of Murdok Horah filled her soul with fear, disgust and abhorrence. She shrank with her whole nature from meeting him again in the morning. What if he should take the same rude liberty with her again! She would rather fire should scorch her face than his lips should touch it! She would not risk that. She resolved to go to The Notches early in the morning, leaving a note of explanation for her dear mamma. Oh, that such a mother should have such a son!

Would Mrs. Horah be angry with her for going away so abruptly? she asked herself. Probably she would be very angry, the girl thought; but she could bear the anger of the lady better than the advances of the young man. And now, although she had made up her mind what to do in the morning, she could not compose herself to sleep. Very exaggerated emotion, some might say, but it was the girl's nature.

While Zenobia was grieving in her room, Mrs. Horah was mildly admonishing the young brute in the parlor.

"Whe-ew! The young lady puts on the airs of a princess!" Murdok said, with a laugh, as Zenobia left the room.

"You have shocked her, my dear. Remember, Murdok, you and she are no longer children," gravely remarked the mother.

"Well, we were brought up like brother and sister," laughed the son.

"But she is not really your sister, Murdok!"

"Gad! I am awfully glad she is not. She is too hand-

some to be my sister and some other fellow's sweetheart!" said the young man, with a sardonic chuckle.

"Oh, Murdok, mind how you talk!" pleaded the lady, uneasily.

"I do mind how I talk. I mind very much how I talk. She is the most beautiful creature I have ever seen in my life, and I am jolly glad she isn't my sister, and some other fellow's sweetheart. I say, mother, save her up for me until I come back. And, maybe, I will come home sooner than I promised, with such a bait to land me!' he added, with a loud laugh.

Then he arose, yawned and declared that he was played out, and that he would go to bed.

Once more Mrs. Horah touched the bell, and the summons brought Brush.

The next morning Mrs. Horah was down early in the parlor, which was her favorite sitting room, and where, since she had been ailing, the meals had been served. The windows were all open, and a pleasant morning air, laden with the refreshing fragrance of the surrounding balsamic pines and firs, came through. The breakfast table was set, and there was nothing to do but to wait for the appearance of the other members of the family. Mrs. Horah sank into her easy-chair beside the window, and took her knitting from her little workbasket—her "everlasting knitting" as her friends called it—and worked away until the door opened, and Murdok appeared.

He gave his mother a curt good-morning, and then looked around the room as if in search of somebody or something.

"Where is Zena?" he inquired.

"She has not come down yet," answered Mrs. Horah.

"Lazy little baggage! But a luscious little beauty like she is may be forgiven for lying abed late," he said, with a laugh.

"It is very late for her. She is usually down and off for a walk or a ride on the mountain long before I am down. And, by the way, she may have gone out this morning, and is staying longer than usual."

"What's became of Godfrey?" was Murdok's next question.

"He has gone for his usual summer vacation, to visit his brother in Maryland. But I am expecting him back by every train. Si has already gone to the station to meet him."

"Now, you don't mean to say that that fellow is hanging on here yet!" exclaimed Murdok.

"Yes. As you know, after you went to Charlottesville, I retained him to give Zenobia a higher education than I was capable of imparting to her."

"Now, what the devil should a delicious little beauty like Zena want of that?" he demanded, impatiently.

"She may have to earn her living as a teacher," said the lady.

"Never! while I am master of Horah Hall!" fiercely exclaimed the son.

Mrs. Horah made no reply.

"Is that fellow, curse him, still giving that girl lessons?"

"Not regularly. But he directs her reading and assists her when she requires it."

"And hangs around her all the time, d——n him! He'll bolt with her some of these days!"

"Murdok!" It was but a word, but it expressed an intensity of painful disapprobation that a severe lecture could not have conveyed.

"Well, why don't you send him away? I don't want him hanging about this girl!"

"I will not discharge him, because he is even more useful, and I may say necessary, to me than he is to Zenobia. He now oversees the plantation and manages all my money matters."

"And is to be my stepfather some of these days! Well, I'd rather he would be that than to run off with Zena! But if he expects to hang up his hat in Horah Hall after I come home he'll find himself kicked out, stepfather or no stepfather!" growled the surly young beast.

Isabel Horah had risen to her feet, her hand resting on the elbow of her chair, her pale face crimson. At first she could not speak, but presently she said in low, stern tones:

"Murdok, if you permit yourself to address such im-

pertinent remarks to me again, you will force me to leave the room." And she sank back in her chair and covered her face with her hands.

He was somewhat startled by the effect his words had produced, though he had no appreciation of their gross impropriety, as addressed to the widowed lady of Horah Hall.

"Oh, come now, mother! Can't you take a joke?" he exclaimed, trying to turn the affair off with a laugh.

She could not answer him. And, happily, just then Brush came in and handed a sealed envelope to his mistress, saying in reply to her surprised and questioning look:

"Yes'm, Miss Snowby gone ridin' out on de gray pony, an' she gib me dis at de stable do' ter gib ter you, jist as she rode away."

By this time Mrs. Horah had broken the seal, opened the note, and was reading as follows:

"My Beloved Mamma: Oh, I hope you will not be displeased with me for going over to The Notches this morning to see Jemima. I really think that it will be best for us all. You should have Murdok all to yourself while he stays at home. If I have made a mistake, pray forgive me. And, oh, dearest mamma, please do permit me to stay with Jemima for the present. You can do without me better, now that you have Murdok, than you could at any other time. And when I return to Horah Hall I will try to be a better daughter to you than I have ever been before; for, oh, my darling mamma, surely I know how much I owe to you! Will you please, dearest mamma, to let Uncle Si call at The Notches on his way to the post office, to let me know whether you are displeased with me or not? Oh, I pray you are not. But I shall never have an instant's peace until I hear. Please send me word that you forgive me? Your loving child,

"Saturday, 7 A. M. Zenobia."

"Poor, frightened dove," murmured the lady, as she folded the note and put it into her pocket.

"What's all that about?" demanded Murdok.

"Only a few lines from Zenobia, to explain that she has

gone over to The Notches to visit Jemima," replied the lady.

"And who the devil is Jemima?" sharply demanded Murdok, who was exasperated at the departure of the girl, with whom he had expected to enjoy a couple of days of love-making.

"Brush, bring in the breakfast!" said Mrs. Horah, ignoring the rude question of the young man.

He did not repeat it, but turned away and stood looking out of the window, with a lowering brow.

Brush brought in the breakfast. Such a feast it was! The cook had reason to know something about the appetite of her young master and what a feeder he was.

He sat down with his mother to a *tête-à-tête* breakfast, and while coffee, rolls, rice cakes, bacon, eggs and chicken disappeared before him, he dropped the subject of Zenobia's departure. Not a word was uttered during the meal. Mrs. Horah was too much depressed for conversation, and Murdok too much occupied with his breakfast.

When, at last, it was finished, he turned to Brush, who was waiting on the table, and abruptly demanded:

"What horses have you in the stable?"

"Well, yer see, Marse Murdok, sah," began the man, with the indirectness of his class, "dere's de gray pony, but Miss Snowby hab tuk him; an' dere's de white mare, but Uncle Si hab got him; an' dere's——"

"Idiot! I didn't ask you what was out, but what was in!"

"Ye-yes, sah!—sart'nly, sah! De brack filly, sah! an' de ca'age hosses an' de mules, sah. Yes, sah!" Brush hastened to explain.

Then harness the black filly to the dogcart, and bring them around to the door in half an hour, and get yourself ready to drive me over to The Notches," he commanded, and immediately left the parlor.

Brush began quickly to clear away the breakfast service. Mrs. Horah sat down to her little writing desk, and wrote to her adopted daughter as follows:

"My Beloved Child: Stay as long as you please with your friends at The Notches. When you come home to

me, dear, I will receive you with open arms and unchanged affection.

"Your loving mamma,

"Saturday, 9 A. M. I. H."

She sealed this note, and called to Brush just as he was preparing to leave the room, with a heavily laden tray.

"Here," she said, giving him the missive, "put this in your pocket, and when you reach The Notches give it to Miss Zenobia with your own hand. Do you understand?"

"Yes, mist'ess, ma'am, I does; an' I'll mine w'at yer tell me, ma'am!" replied the man, carefully stowing the note away.

He quickly finished his work in the parlor, and hurried off to do his master's bidding at the stables.

In a few minutes later he drove the dogcart up to the door. Murdok came lumbering lazily down the front stairs, went out, climbed into the vehicle and ordered the negro to drive on.

Mrs. Horah, standing at the front window of the long drawing room, watched the cart out of sight. Then she returned to the back parlor, sank into an easy-chair, and took up her "contemplative knitting work."

A strange, inexplicable feeling of actual repugnance to Murdok was coming over her; a feeling which she could not understand nor overcome; a feeling which wounded her mother heart, and for which she bitterly blamed herself.

"Is it possible," she moaned, "that I am taking a dislike to my own son? Oh, who will be charitable to a man's faults, if his own mother cannot be? Ah, God help us both!" she prayed, covering her face with her hands.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A HEART OF FIRE.

The cold in clime are cold in blood;
Their love can scarce deserve the name;
But mine was like the lava flood,
That boils in Etna's breast of flame.—BYRON.

As Murdok Horah approached the house at The Notches he saw that all the family were assembled and seated on the front piazza, enjoying the fine air and clear sunshine of the early September morning.

The two girls were making lace, and Jemima was teaching Zenobia a rare new stitch that she had learned at the convent.

Oliver was cleaning a gun for his father, preparatory to a partridge shooting, at which the latter was an expert.

The colonel himself was reading aloud to the party from a Washington paper that had come in that morning's mail. As he heard the approach of heels on the drive, he looked up, saw the dogcart, laid down his paper and rose to meet his visitor, muttering:

"Hello! Who is this?" for in the broad, bloated, black-bearded man, lounging back in the cart, he did not recognize the slim, active, smooth-faced boy who had gone away to the university so long before.

"Good-morning, Col. Pryor," said Murdok, getting awkwardly out of the cart, and offering his hand.

"Ah, good-morning, Mr. Horah. I am glad to see you back again, sir. Miss de Leon told me that you had arrived unexpectedly last evening. And yet, knowing that, I failed to recognize you at first sight. You have changed very much, sir," said the colonel, genially shaking hands with the young man, for he had heard no ill reports of him during his long absence; and then, he was Isabel Horah's idolized son, and that fact would have covered a multitude of sins in Nat Pryor's judgment.

"A young man does between seventeen and twenty," returned Murdok, with a laugh.

Meantime, Brush had left the cart, secured the horses, gone up on the piazza, and handed the note from Mrs.

Horah to Zenobia. The girl, who had been startled and terrified by the sudden appearance of Murdok, fearing that he had been sent to carry her back to Horah Hall, now turned as pale as death, as she opened the envelope, dreading to find in it an order for her return. But when she read the kind words that gave her permission to stay at The Notches as long as she should desire to do so, yet assured her of an affectionate welcome when she should return, and of undying affection for all time, Zenobia's face flashed into that heavenly beauty which joy can lend to the loveliest. And yet, as Col. Pryor and Murdok Horah stepped upon the piazza, and approached them, she shrank closer to the side of Jemima, and passed her arm within that of her friend.

"Jemima, my dear," said the colonel, presenting his visitor, "this is Mr. Murdok Horah, the son of our honored neighbor at the Hall. Sir, my niece, Miss Abbace."

Jemima half rose and slightly bowed in response to the visitor's elaborate obeisance.

Tim, who had come upon the scene as in duty bound, placed a chair near the young ladies, and Murdok dropped indolently into it. Oliver now stood his gun in a corner, left his work, and came up and greeted the foe of his boyhood with frank good nature, and seated himself near the group.

But Murdok Horah had thoughts, feelings and eyes only for the beautiful girl before him; his gaze glowed upon her like sunglasses. He longed to catch her in his arms, press her to his bosom and cover her face with kisses! He dared not take such a liberty with her here, even on the pretext of her being his foster sister. He must take her back to Horah Hall, where he might have her to himself for the next two days. So absorbed was he in the contemplation of the lovely girl that he started when spoken to, and found difficulty in taking an intelligent part in the conversation. He longed to get her away from them all, to have her by his own side alone. He determined to take her back to Horah Hall that very forenoon; and, although he hated exertion of any kind, to send Brush home on foot, and drive the dogcart himself, so that he might have a long *tête-à-tête* with this delightful beauty. At last he could restrain his impatience no

longer. Turning toward her with an affectation of light, good humor, he inquired:

"Well, little runaway, do you know what has brought me here this morning?"

"No," replied Zenoba, as her eyes fell and her color rose.

"And can you not hazard a guess?"

"No, unless you came to pay your respects to Col. Pryor."

"I have, certainly, very great respect for Col. Pryor, but strict etiquette would require me to wait for a call from the colonel, if there had been no urgent reason for my appearance. Come, now, why am I here?"

"I do not know," replied the girl, without raising her eyes.

"Ah! I will make her look at me before all is done!" he muttered under his breath. Then aloud: "I have come to carry you back to Horah Hall."

"But I do not wish to go," said Zenobia, beginning to tremble, although she knew she was safe in her position, with Mrs. Horah's note in her pocket.

"You do not wish to go? Surely that is very unkind and cruel," said Murdok, devouring her beauty with his fierce, glowing eyes.

The other members of the party saw and heard, but at this stage of the conversation could not interrupt it.

"But I feel sure you will go, when I tell you that my mother is not feeling well and desires your presence," Murdok Horah resumed.

At this she suddenly raised her eyes to his with such a flash of scorn at his falsehood that his full, black orbs fell before them.

"She sent me here to fetch you. Come! get your things on at once, my dear," he added, with an effort to seem unembarrassed."

"But I cannot go," said Zenobia, turning her head and clinging closer to the arm of Jemima.

Her friends all looked at her in surprise. Never before had the girl been known to display a selfish or disobedient spirit. Murdok noticed the unfavorable impression she had made and took instant advantage of it.

"What!" he exclaimed, in a tone of mild reproach, "will

you really disregard the wishes, not to say so harsh a word as command, of your sick mother?"

Zenobia once more raised her eyes, full of scorn, and fixed them on his face, as she replied:

"I will send an answer to mamma."

His face darkened.

"Miss de Leon," he said, putting a severe restraint upon his temper, and speaking with grave calmness, "I am very sorry to be emphatic in this matter with a young lady, but I fear it is my duty to insist—no, I will not say so—but to entreat you to return with me. Get ready at once, I beg you."

Zenobia neither moved nor spoke in response to this urgent speech. She saw and felt the evil impression she was making on those dear friends whose good opinion she valued so highly, and yet she generously forbode to produce the note, which, though it would have exculpated her, must have convicted Murdok of falsehood.

At this juncture the young man made, as it were, a false move which obliged her to checkmate him at all hazards.

Seeing the look of surprise and disapproval of the girl's conduct on Col. Pryor's honest face, he turned to him and said:

"Sir, may I appeal to your kindness, and beg your influence to induce this young lady to return home with me?"

"My dear child," said the good man, in embarrassment, and with some hesitation, "surely you know how much we all love you, and delight to have you here whenever we can, but we dare not detain you when your mother sends for you, and it is your clear duty to return to her. You do not know what pain it gives me to say this, my dear," sighed the colonel, raising her hand to his lips.

Murdok looked triumphant. But only for an instant.

Zenobia drew Mrs. Horah's note from her pocket, and put it into Col. Pryor's hand, saying:

"Please read that, sir."

The puzzled man opened and read it, muttering to himself:

"H'm! h'm! h'm!"

As soon as he had finished it, Zenobia held out her hand to take it again, perhaps to prevent it being passed around; but Murdok, whose curiosity was excited, though he had no suspicion of the contents of the note, coolly intercepted it, covering his effrontery with a light laugh, and asking as a mere matter of form:

"May I not also read this?"

"Yes," replied Zenobia.

"The devil!" exclaimed Murdok, when he had finished it.

"Exactly! I quite agree with you!" assented Nat Pryor, breaking into one of his irrepressible laughs.

Jemima and Oliver looked up in surprise and perplexity.

"I—really, I—— This is very embarrassing. My mother must have changed her mind very suddenly. It is true I did not see her at the moment of starting. She must have written and sent this by the coachman," said Murdok, recovering some of his assurance.

"Yes," said Zenobia, feeling some pity as well as contempt for the mortified brute.

"So you see how uncertain are the moods of mothers," he added.

Nat Pryor laughed, laid his broad hand caressingly on the dark curls of Zenobia, and explained to his wondering son and niece:

"This is nothing more than a slight misunderstanding of the lady's wishes, my dears. And our dear Zenobia will remain with us until further orders," he added, patting the girl's head.

"So glad!" exclaimed Jemima, drawing Zenobia to her heart, and kissing her.

Murdok Horah shuddered with envious, covetous rage. The time would come, he swore to himself, when no one but himself should kiss those perfect lips.

"And now, Mr. Horah," said the hospitable colonel, "as your errand is satisfactorily disposed of, let me send your horse and cart to the stable, and do you stay and spend the day with us."

Angry and mortified as Murdok Horah was, he could not refuse to avail himself of this invitation that would give him the presence of Zenobia all day long. But, after

all, he had condemned himself to the fate of Tantalus. He could only look and long. Zenobia sat beside her girl friend, working at her lace, and never even raised her eyes in his direction; while Col. Pryor plied him with local politics until he was wild with impatience. He thought of asking Zenobia out for a walk, but, rude as he was, he knew he could not do so without also inviting Jemima to join them; and that arrangement would not please him at all. It was a *tête-à-tête* with the beauty that he longed for.

At last, to make matters worse, Col. Pryor invited him to go with him out to the stables to see a famous draught horse that he had recently purchased! a very Samson among horses, and whose name, therefore, was no other than Samson.

To decline to go and inspect his host's prize horse would be an affront that even Murdok could not venture to offer Col. Pryor. So the two men walked off to the stables, leaving the young people alone on the piazza.

"Oh, Jemima, dear, let us go upstairs to your room, now that we can get away without rudeness," pleaded Zenobia. Then, seeing the disappointed look in Noll Pryor's face, she added:

"And you may come, too, Oliver. May he not, Jemima?" she instantly inquired, in sudden recognition of her friend's rights.

"Of course he can," heartily responded Miss Abbace.

And the three young birds flew aloft. Safe from annoyance in Jemima's room, where all the doors and windows stood open to let the breezes of the warm September noon pass freely through, the two girls sat down to their lace-making, while Oliver, seated on a low stool, with his father's gun across his knees, and a piece of chamois skin in his hand, was polishing the silver mountings. They were good-natured, so they indulged in no harsh criticisms of the obnoxious visitor from whom they had stolen away.

Meanwhile the inspection of the stables and appraisement of the prize horse being over, the colonel and his guest returned to the house. When the two men stepped upon the piazza and found that the young people had left, the surprise, disappointment and disgust of Murdok

Horah could not be expressed in words, nor quite concealed in his countenance.

"Where are they gone?" he inquired, as he dropped heavily in an armchair.

"Who? The young folks? Lord knows! Down in the apple orchard, maybe! I reckon they'll be in soon. The sun is too hot to let them stay out long," said Col. Pryor, as he handed a turkey-wing fan to his guest, and sank back into another armchair, calling out to Tim, who was watering the lawn, to fetch a pitcher of ice-cold cider from the cellar. Then he opened a cigar case and offered his visitor a good Havana, and took another for himself.

But neither cider nor cigars consoled Murdok for the absence of Zenobia, while the colonel talked draught horses and politics alternately, until Murdok heartily wished him and his horse and the county politicians all at Hades together. And, worse than all, the girls did not return to the piazza, nor did Mr. Horah see them again until dinner.

"It was the devil's own luck," Murdok said to himself, when he realized the arrangement of the seats.

Jemima presided at the head of the table, the colonel at the foot, and Murdok Horah had the seat of honor on the right, and Zenobia and Oliver sat together on the left side. They were just opposite him, and he could gaze on her at will, but she never raised her eyes to his face; and if he spoke to her, she answered him very briefly, but not rudely.

After dinner, when they had all passed into the parlor, the two girls went to the piano, Zenobia to play the accompaniment, while they sang an old-fashioned ballad to please Col. Pryor. Soon Oliver joined them with his rich baritone voice. Murdok, who knew neither the tune nor the words, had to content himself with making one of the audience of two. And he silently cursed music, musicians and musical instruments. Nevertheless, he had to endure them all, for one song followed another until the tea bell rang, and they went into the dining room and were placed at the table in the same objectionable order in which they had sat at dinner.

After tea it was expected that the visitor would depart, but he did not. He followed the family into the parlor,

where they engaged in a desultory conversation until the evening wore on toward bedtime. Now a sickening fear crept upon Zenobia that when Murdok Horah should bid them all good-night, he would take advantage of it and kiss her again before she could prevent him. It was morbid, perhaps. It was ridiculous, some might think; but there it was. The fear grew upon her to such an extent that it brought on a headache. Soon she found opportunity to whisper aside to Jemima:

"I am going to slip away as soon as I can do so unobserved. I have a headache. Do, please, make my excuses when our visitor goes."

Jemima looked up in some surprise and anxiety, but Zenobia gave her a reassuring glance, and turned aside. A few minutes later, when, for an instant Murdok Horah happened to be looking toward Col. Pryor, to answer some question the latter had put to him, she silently slipped out of the room and fled to her chamber.

"Why, what has become of my little sister? Where has she gone?" inquired Murdok, as soon as he looked around again and missed her.

"She has a headache, and has gone to her room. She desired me to ask you to excuse her," said Jemima.

"What! gone without bidding me good-night!" exclaimed Murdok, his face darkening.

"She was suffering. You were talking with uncle. She did not like to interrupt you," quietly replied Jemima.

The parlor of The Notches had no further attraction for Murdok Horah, and he wished to get away where he could give vent to the rage that filled his bosom.

"Shall I trouble you, Col. Pryor, to order my trap to be brought to the door?" he asked.

"Certainly," responded the colonel, promptly ringing the bell.

Tim came in and received the order.

Under almost any other circumstances the colonel would have followed the custom of the country, and invited the visitor to stay all night, but now Nat Pryor was already reproaching himself for having asked the young man to spend the day, thus keeping him from his mother, who probably wanted his company, and inflicting him on Zenobia, who apparently did not.

Tim soon reappeared and announced the dogcart.

Murdok took leave and departed.

As soon as he got into his trap, and as the driver took the reins and started the horse, Murdok poured out the vials of his wrath upon that unfortunate negro.

"What did you mean, you infernal scoundrel, by taking Miss de Leon a note without my knowledge?"

Brush, utterly unconscious of having done anything improper, underhand or objectionable, was so amazed at this assault that he could not, for a time, find anything to say, but simply turned around and stared, open-mouthed, at his master.

"What the devil did you mean? I ask you. Answer me before I shove my fist down your gaping throat!"

"Marse Murdok, sah, I—I—I tuk dat dere note an' guv it right inter Miss Snowby's hans'; an' 'cordin' ter orders nebbers ter trus' it ter no nigger at de No'ches."

"Why, you cursed idiot, why did you not give it to me to take into the young lady?"

" 'Cause I were tole ter liber it right inter Miss Snowby's own hans'. An' I nebber t'ought as it wer' a ge'man's callin' ter tote notes w'en he had a mansarvent ter do it," replied Brush, with simple truthfulness, for he had no suspicion of his master.

"Now listen to me, you stupid donkey!"

"Ye-ye-yes, sah!"

"If you ever take a note to Miss de Leon without my knowledge, I will break every bone in your black body, do you hear?"

"Ye-ye-yes, sah," assented Brush.

The remainder of the drive was in perfect silence.

When they reached Horah Hall thy found the front of the house shut up, and all the household retired to rest, with the exception of Celia, who was in the parlor, waiting up for her young master. She had a tempting cold supper laid out for him, with which the old brandy and chopped ice did not fail to appear.

"Where is my mother?" demanded Murdok, as he threw down his hat and gloves, and cast himself into a chair before the bountifully spread table.

"The mistress did not feel well, and she retired to bed about an hour ago," Celia answered.

"H'm!" ejaculated Murdok. And he addressed himself to his supper and made a hearty meal.

"Tell me," he said, as he mixed for himself a stiff brandy smash, "has Miss de Leon any beaux?"

"Miss de Leon! Beaux! Dear me, no, sir. Miss Zenobia is only a child! She never thinks of beaux," Celia exclaimed, in all her sincerity, for those among whom a young girl grows up are usually the last to recognize her womanhood.

"H'm! Not that clown, Pryor?"

"Why, no, sir. Of course not," persisted Celia.

"Well, I am glad to hear it, because I mean to marry her myself."

"You would do her too much honor, sir!"

"Very likely, but that's my business, not yours," said Mr. Horah, as he poured the last of the brandy from the bottle into his tumbler, and drained it at a draught. Then he took his paper, and without vouchsafing so much as a civil good-night to his faithful servant, reeled off to bed.

CHAPTER XXX.

BETWEEN LOVE AND RAGE.

> I would outstare the sternest eyes that look,
> Outbrave the heart most daring on the earth,
> Pluck the young sucking cubs from the she-bear,
> Yes, mock the lion when he roars for prey,
> To win thee.—SHAKESPEARE.

Although Mrs. Horah had passed an anxious, feverish, sleepless night, she rose early, dressed and went down into the back parlor, to meet or hear of her son.

His defection on the previous day had wounded and depressed her. Yet she was more disposed to criticise herself than to blame him.

"I am morbid," she said to herself. "Young men will be young men, they say; and I suppose they are all alike. My experience with them has been very limited. And yet, there is Gilbert Godfrey and Oliver Pryor. But they must be exceptions! And Murdok is just the average

young man; no better nor worse than the generality of his compeers," she concluded.

Yet this conclusion humbled her maternal pride. She had long tried to convince herself that he was in every respect, physically, morally, intellectually, so far above the average.

When she entered the parlor she found no one there except Brush, who had opened all the windows, put the room in order and was now setting the table for breakfast. He immediately left his work and wheeled the easy armchair to the rose-shaded south window for his mistress.

"Where is Master Murdok?" she inquired, as she sank wearily into her seat.

"He aine down yet, ma'am—no, ma'am," replied the man, returning to his task at the table.

"What time did you bring him home last night?" she inquired next.

"We got to de hous' 'bout twelve o'clock, ma'am."

"He was well?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am."—"Well in his healf, but moughty ill in his temper," he added, mentally.

Before another word could be spoken the door swung open, and Murdok Horah lounged heavily into the room, and, without saluting his mother, dropped into the leathern armchair, red-eyed, stupid and irritable.

"Close the shutters, you infernal idiot! What the devil do you mean by letting in such a blaze of sunshine?" he angrily exclaimed, blinking with his bloodshot orbs.

Brush hastened to obey by shutting the east windows.

"Now bring in the breakfast," said the lady, when the man had finished his task.

Murdok, on entering the room, had not spoken one word to his mother, for he was angry with her for having given permission to Zenobia to stay at The Notches, in the company of that "clown," as he chose to call Oliver Pryor, when he himself wanted her presence at home. But as soon as the servant left the room he said, sulkily:

"I went to The Notches yesterday morning to bring Zenobia back, but I found, to my surprise, that you had, at the same time, dispatched a note by the coachman to the girl, authorizing her to remain there as long as she should please."

"It was in response to her own earnest request," coldly replied the lady, wondering at and blaming herself for the sense of disgust and repulsion that she was beginning to feel toward her son.

"It is a great pity that there cannot be some mutual understanding and consistency in our actions," he growled.

"A very great pity," the lady assented.

"Well, I have not troubled my home or my people much of late years, and propose to trouble them still less in years to come," said the young man, with a glance at his mother to see how she took his words.

But the fair, pale face of the lady was cold and expressionless.

"I am here now only for a few days, and have to start on a voyage around the world—a voyage from which I may never return; and I think it is a slight, almost amounting to an insult, for that girl to absent herself during my short visit."

"She said that she thought you might prefer to be alone with me during that brief period preceding the long voyage and the doubtful return," replied the lady.

"Then she lied!"

Mrs. Horah started as this rude word struck her ear, but she made no comment.

"She knew d—— well that I wanted her here. And now the whole truth of the matter is that it is all caprice in which she should not be indulged. The only thing left for you to do is to send her a note telling her to come home, and I will drive over to The Notches and take it with me, and fetch her. And then I——"

He was interrupted by the entrance of Brush, carrying in his hands a large and heavily laden tray, which he placed on the table. Then he arranged a substantial and tempting breakfast, and placed two chairs.

"Now get out!" exclaimed Murdok to Brush, who opened his eyes and mouth, and stared in perplexity.

"Leave the room, confound you! We can wait on ourselves!" roared his master.

Brush now understood and obeyed.

"Only two places! Only me and you! Then that 'beat' has not come back," said Murdok, referring to Gil-

bert Godfrey, though Mrs. Horah did not choose to understand or reply.

Murdok then devoted his exclusive attention to his food, and devoured it with a wolfish hunger that was enough to take away the appetite of the most robust companion. He did not notice that his mother's breakfast consisted of a cup of coffee and a small slice of bread. When he had finished his meal he rose from the table and rang the bell.

Brush answered it.

"Put the black horse to the buggy and bring them round here to the door, and look sharp about it. Do you hear?" said the master.

"Yes, sah. Mus' I git ready ter dribe yer, sah?" deferentially inquired Brush.

"Did I say anything about you driving me? No, you idiot! I have had enough of your driving and letter carrying, too. I shall drive myself, and carry my own letters this time. Jump, now! and do as you are told, or it will be worse for you!"

Brush jumped and vanished.

"Now, mother, time flies! If you have got through breakfast, please write that note at once. The man will be round with the buggy by the time you have finished it."

"What note, Murdok?" inquired the poor lady, very foolishly, for she knew what he wanted, but weakly hesitated to refuse him, and dreaded the inevitable collision between them.

"What note?" he repeated, with contemptuous incredulity. "As if you did not know well enough what note! Why, of course, I mean the note I asked you to write to the girl, to call her home."

"Murdok, I am sorry to refuse you anything, but I cannot do it," said the lady, mildly but distinctly.

"You cannot do it?"

"No!"

"Why can you not?"

"Because I should be doing wrong in canceling the permission I gave her to stay."

His dark face grew darker. He smothered a profane imprecation that was about to break from his lips. He had never been accustomed to control his evil passions;

such a rôle was new to him; yet now he repressed his rage, and condescended to plead, argue and urge his case, fully believing, from all his experience, that he must conquer in the end. But when, at length, he found that all arguments, persuasions and entreaties were equally and altogether powerless to move his mother from the rock of right on which she stood—I shrink from describing the scene that ensued—he threw self-control, prudence and reverence to the winds. He conducted himself in a manner such as no human being should to another, much less a man to a woman, and least of all, a son to his mother. He used language such as a saint would scarcely have patience to hear. And Isabel Horah was no saint. She, also, became indignant, excited and vehement in her reproaches, until, at length, her torrent of words was suddenly arrested by a violent and prolonged fit of coughing, which ended at last by a gush of blood from her lips. She sank back into her chair and held her handkerchief to her mouth.

"And now the girl will have to come home, willy-nilly," said Murdok, as he rang the bell.

Brush answered it promptly, saying as he entered:

" 'Deed an' 'deed, Marse Murdok, sah, I did make all de has'e I could! An' de buggy is at de do', an'—— Oh, my good Lor' A'mighty! Look at mist'ess!" he suddenly exclaimed in horror, as his eyes fell upon the form of the lady fallen back in her chair, and holding the crimsoned handkerchief to her blanched face.

"Yes; she has had an attack of some sort. Go and call Servia and the rest to look after her. I must be off to The Notches to fetch Miss de Leon home."

Brush flew out; and in another minute, Servia, Delphie and even Celia, who, though she was the poultry woman, and her duties were outside, had been very much about the house since her young master's return, came running into the room in great alarm.

"Look after your mistress!" Murdok exclaimed, in answer to their terrified inquiries. "I am going to bring Miss de Leon home to her." And he left the room, in ignorance, it is hoped, of his mother's serious illness.

When he opened the door he found that the sky was clouded, and threatening rain, if not one of the sudden and

violent storms peculiar to the month of September. He stepped back, took a large umbrella from the hall rack, jumped into the buggy and drove off. He put the horse to his utmost speed, and reached The Notches just as the rain was beginning to fall.

The piazza was, of course, deserted. He sprang from the buggy, ran up the steps, and knocked loudly at the closed door.

Tim opened it, and showed him at once into the front parlor, where he found Col. Pryor, Jemima and Zenobia.

Col. Pryor rose to receive his visitor, his honest face expressing the astonishment he felt.

"You are surprised to see me here so soon again, sir," said Murdok, as they shook hands, "but the fact is, my mother had a seizure this morning."

"A seizure!" exclaimed Zenobia, rising in alarm.

"My God! It is what I have feared!" cried Col. Pryor, turning pale.

The two had spoken simultaneously.

"Yes; a hemorrhage of the lungs, I think it is. And I have come to escort Miss de Leon home to her," continued Murdok, who had just bowed to the girls.

"Oh, I will get ready and go at once! at once! Come, dear Jemima!" exclaimed Zenobia, forgetting all her dread of Murdok, all her care for herself in her fears for her beloved "mamma."

"Have you summoned a physician?" anxiously inquired Col. Pryor, when both the girls had left the room.

"Not yet, but I——"

"Then in the name of Heaven, sir, jump into your buggy and drive as fast as possible to Mistyrock and fetch the doctor with you!" exclaimed the colonel, in a vehement tone of command.

"But I came to carry Miss de Leon, and——"

"D—— it, man, are you mad? She wants the doctor more than the girl! Go instantly! A most precious life hangs in the balance! Delay may be fatal! Go! Go!"

"But I can take Miss de Leon along with me!"

"You cannot, sir. Her additional weight would lessen your speed! In any case, I would not allow her to start from this house, through such a rain, in an open buggy. I will take her myself to the Hall, in my closed carriage.

Why do you hesitate when your mother's life hangs on a thread? Good God, man! are you a parricide?"

Murdok, overwhelmed by the impetuosity of the alarmed and indignant colonel, departed at once, inwardly cursing everybody, and taking his spite out on the poor horse, which he lashed into a fury of speed as they tore along through the storm, yet consoling himself with the anticipation of soon meeting Zenobia at the Hall and having her more to himself because of his mother's illness, which would confine her to her bed for a time, even if she should recover at last.

Meanwhile, Col. Pryor ordered Tim to harness the new horse to the close carriage, and to incase himself in a waterproof cloak and overalls, to drive to Horah Hall.

As the man went out to execute the order Zenobia came in equipped for her drive, and looked around uneasily for her dreaded companion.

"He has gone to Mistyrock for the doctor, my dear. I shall take you home," said the colonel. "Oh, Jemima, my dear," he added, as his niece entered the parlor, "run and put on your bonnet. I want you to return with Zenobia, and be as useful as you know how to be in this trouble."

Jemima gladly flew to do his bidding, and Zenobia turned to him with tearful eyes, saying:

"Thank you, sir! Oh, thank you!"

"I know! I know, my dear! Old Nat Pryor is not blind! Keep Jemima with you until that young scapegrace has gone," said the good colonel.

And Zenobia wondered, since she had never breathed a word to anyone of Murdok's rudeness to her, how the colonel came to divine her dread of that young man.

Jemima returned just as the carriage drove up to the door. Then the three, all well defended against the weather by their waterproof cloaks and overshoes, entered the carriage and drove through the terrible equinoctial storm of thunder, lightning and rain to Horah Hall, where they arrived in safety.

"Drive the carriage round to the stable and put up the horse, Tim. I shall spend the day here. Perhaps the night, too, if I should be wanted, said the colonel, as he handed the two girls out, and drove them quickly on before him up under the shelter of the piazza.

CHAPTER XXXI.

AN ANXIOUS GATHERING.

> Then a voice within his breast
> Whispered audible and clear,
> As if to the outward ear,
> "Do thy duty; that is best;
> To the Lord leave all the rest."
>
> —LONGFELLOW.

The door was opened by Brush before Col. Pryor had time to ring.

"How is your mistress?" inquired the colonel, in a whisper.

"De Lor' A'mighty knows, Marse Colonel! But bad 'nuff, I's feared. De wimmin tuk her upstairs an' put her ter bed, an' dey's all up dere 'long ob her now," replied the man, ready to melt into unmanly tears, as he led the way to the back parlor and opened the door.

To the surprise of the visitors, Gilbert Godfrey came forward to meet them.

"Mr. Godfrey! you here! I am very glad," exclaimed the colonel, cordially shaking hands with him.

"Arrived about an hour ago," said the young man, as he bowed to the girls with deferential politeness.

"You met distressing news here," groaned the colonel.

"Yes! I was very much shocked and pained. Yet I hope for the best. The hemorrhage has ceased, and the lady is sleeping now, as I hear from the attendants," explained Godfrey.

The two girls left the gentlemen together in the parlor, and slipped into the hall, where they dropped their wraps, and then stole on tiptoe up the stairs and stopped before Mrs. Horah's door, on which Zenobia softly knocked.

Servia silently opened the door, came out and as silently shut it behind her.

"Oh, how is she?" breathed Zenobia, with her whole soul in the aspiration.

"Better than we could have hoped when we first found her, my dear," answered the woman. "The hemorrhage had ceased itself even before we brought her up here, and

the loss of blood was but slight. But you know a little of it causes anxiety, and the very sight of it is alarming," answered Servia, as she led the way to the other end of the passage so that their voices might not reach the sick room.

"When can we see her?" breathlessly demanded Zenobia.

"What has been done for her?" eagerly inquired Jemima.

They spoke simultaneously, but somehow Servia understood, and answered both questions.

"You must not disturb her yet, Miss Zenobia. Fortunately, Mr. Godfrey arrived here just before we took her upstairs. And it seems, though I never knew it before, that he had been a medical student, and only missed being a doctor by having to leave college before he took his degree. So he knew what was to be done for the mistress at once, and he had it done, and now she is lying in a sweet sleep. When she wakes I will let you know, but you must not speak to her, or let her move or talk. And now I must slip back into the room, young ladies," concluded Servia, who silently returned to her duties in the sick chamber.

The girls went down and reported to Col. Pryor. Then Zenobia thanked Gilbert Godfrey for his timely and skillful attention to her "mamma."

Col. Pryor looked around in surprise and said:

"Why, who gave you a diploma, Godfrey?"

"No one, sir. But I was a medical student at college for nearly three years, and should have graduated in another year if my funds had held out. I have kept up my reading, however, and know what to do in some emergencies."

"Ah, Gilbert, I wish I had a father's or an uncle's privilege to order you back to your college to finish your course and take your degree!" warmly exclaimed the colonel.

"I thank you, sir. But there are other reasons why I may not return to college. My brother and myself are pledged to each other to pay off all the debts of our family, and clear off the mortgage from our old homestead," said the young man, with a glance toward Jemima, which she met with a blush and a smile.

An hour wore slowly away. The storm had abated. The sound of wheels was heard approaching the house. Zenobia glanced through the front windows and saw the buggy, with two men seated in it, drawing near.

"Come, Jemima," she said, in a low tone, "let us go up into my room. You will excuse me, colonel, and Mr. Godfrey," she added to the gentlemen.

"Of course. We will console ourselves with a couple of cigars," heartily responded the colonel, while the younger man simply bowed in silence.

The girls had just left the parlor when the buggy drew up before the house, and Brush flew to the door and opened it to announce the good news.

"De mist'ess is better, sah!" he exclaimed, without waiting to be questioned. "De young ladies comed down 'bout an hour ago, an' 'ported her sleepin' sweet."

"Ah!" said Dr. Bland, "that is an excellent sign."

Brush ushered them into the parlor, where Col. Pryor and Mr. Godfrey stood up to receive them. After handshaking, the doctor expressed his gratification at hearing that the patient was better and sleeping. And then Col. Pryor said:

"That is due to the providential presence of Mr. Godfrey. He had nearly three years at a medical college, and has done what he could in the emergency. He will give you his report."

"I shall be glad to hear it," replied Dr. Bland.

"Come, Murdok, the rain is over. You and I will take a cigar and a walk on the piazza."

"Where is Zenobia?" inquired the young man.

"Oh, somewhere upstairs, with her inseparable companion, Jemima," replied Col. Pryor.

Murdok scowled.

"Is Miss Abbace here? I should think a house of sickness not a very attractive place for a young lady," he muttered.

"She does not agree with you. Besides, she came here, not to enjoy herself, but to be useful to her friend."

"To be officious," growled Murdok, mentally.

But he accompanied Col. Pryor to the piazza, and walked up and down with him, while the young medical undergraduate gave his report to the physician. Dr. Bland

approved all the young man had done, and decided not to disturb the patient while she slept, but to stay at the Hall until she should wake.

Murdok did not get a glimpse of Zenobia until dinner, when the four men and two girls sat down together. And not for an instant during the remainder of the day did he get a chance to speak to her alone.

It was night before Mrs. Horah woke. Then the doctor saw her, and, after a careful examination, reported her condition very favorable, but ordered the attendants to keep her in bed and to administer light, nutritious food. Then, with a promise to return early the next morning, he left the sick room.

Encouraged by the better prospects of his friend, Nat Pryor also decided to return home.

The buggy, which had so hastily hurried the old doctor from the village, was at his service, with Brush to drive him.

Although the storm was over, the weather was still showery, and so, as the colonel had all his own close carriage to himself, he very politely pressed the aged physician to honor him with his company, and they drove off together.

To Murdok's disgust and displeasure, neither Jemima nor Zenobia remained downstairs after the doctor and the colonel had departed.

Mrs. Horah's spacious chamber was over the front drawing room, and Zenobia's bedroom was in the rear of that, and over the back parlor, but communicated with the lady's apartment by a door. To Zenobia's room the young friends betook themselves for two reasons: First, to get out of Murdok's company, to which they both had a strong antipathy; second, to be at hand in case Mrs. Horah should require their services.

They did not go to bed; but, each robed in a loose wrapper of Zenobia's, they sat in low chairs near the communicating door; and, refraining from all but whispered conversation, listened for every sound from the sick room. So passed the whole night with them.

But not so with Murdok. He walked up and down the floor of the back parlor in a fury of passion, and would have liked to wreak his wrath on some one; he cared not whom. Once he rang for Brush, and when the man came

in he ordered him to go to Miss de Leon and tell her that he must see her immediately on the most important business. The man went on his errand, but after a few minutes, returned with the answer that Miss "Snowby" had 'tired and couldn't come. He cursed and swore, and sent the man back with a more emphatic message, but with no more satisfactory result.

"Then bring me a bottle of brandy, and that box of cigars from the dining room, confound you! And look sharp about it!" he exclaimed, still striding up and down the parlor with the restless motion of a tiger in his cage.

When Brush returned with the brandy and cigars the young beast turned upon him, and growled:

"Get out! But don't you dare to go to bed, as you value your bones! Stay in the hall, there, and walk about to keep yourself awake! Do you hear?"

"Yes, sah! But no danger ob me gwine ter sleep w'en mist'ess might wan' me," answered the loyal servant.

"Hold your tongue and leave the room! Go!"

Brush went.

Murdok dropped into an armchair beside the table, poured out half a tumbler of raw brandy, and drank it off at a draught. Then he lighted one of the strong cigars he favored and began to smoke, growling out his dissatisfaction with all the world between his puffs.

"This is Sunday night, and the steamer sails on Wednesday. I did mean to start to-morrow morning, so as to have two days in New York, to see a little more life on land before going on a ten days' trip across the ocean. Yes! And when I saw what a beauty this girl has grown to be I did intend to have some fun with her for the two days here. But d—— it, I have been balked of her company yesterday and to-day, and I shall be balked of my pleasure for New York to-morrow and next day! And perhaps lose my passage money and voyage besides. Oh, d——!" He broke out in such a volley of oaths that the watching girls in the room over his head heard and shuddered in horror of his profanity, and in terror lest the sound should reach the next room and disturb the sleeping invalid. But, fortunately, it did not. Meanwhile, he sat in the parlor, and smoked, and drank, cursed and swore the night away.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A WELCOMED DEPARTURE.

When Brush entered the parlor the next morning to open the windows and set the table for breakfast he found his master lying on the floor in a drunken stupor. And it took the united strength of Brush, Si and two field hands, called in for the purpose, to lift the heavy sot and carry him up to his room. Although he muttered low curses in his sleep, they effected his removal without waking him. They undressed him, and got him to bed before any of the family were out of their rooms. Then they closed the window blinds, and were about to leave the chamber, when old Si lifted up his hand and said:

"Stop one minnit, chillun, an' listen ter me, all ob yer!"

"All right, Uncle Si! On'y talk low fo' fear he heah," cautioned Brush.

"Who yer chastisin', boy? I'm talkin' easy! 'Sides w'ich, he wouldn't heah de angil Gab'el blow his horn! W'at I were gwine ter say is dis: Dere aine ben no sich thing as dis yere happin inter dis hous', not sense ole Marse Ho'ah used ter gib his ge'men's parties. Den, Lor! dere used ter be ebery night some ge'men had ter be toted ter bed. Yer 'member, B'ush?"

"Yer jis bet I does!" replied the latter.

"Well, now, chillun, I jus' tell yer w'at! Yer mustn' let on to nobody w'at's done happen, leas' ob all ter eny ob de family. Ef Miss Snowby, or Marse Godf'ey ax yer w'ere is Marse Murdok, yer jus' tell a pious lie, fer de honah ob de fam'ly, an' say as how Marse Murdok, he so uneasy 'bout his ma, dat he walked de floo' all night, an' is so ti'ed dis mo'nin' dat he had laid down ter rest hisse'f a little w'ile. Taine no sin ter tell a pious lie fer de honah ob de fam'ly! Taine, indeed, chillun!" concluded the oracle of the quarters, as he led the way from the room and carefully closed the door.

The negroes stole quietly downstairs with bowed heads, as if they had been about some secret and nefarious business, and dispersed to their several duties.

Jemima and Zenobia had watched through the night, crouched on cushions near the door that led into Mrs. Horah's room, resting against each other, or leaning against the partition wall; sometimes dozing, but ever on the alert to catch any sound from the sick room.

When the faint light of dawning day stole in between the slats of the closed window shutters, they softly opened them, put out the night taper, and began to dress themselves. Then they sat down beside the window, watching the slow illumination of the eastern horizon above the mountain, and listening for sounds from the next room, which they did not dare to enter for fear of disturbing the sleeper. They heard nothing from there, but they did hear several heavy steps coming up the stairs and entering the opposite room, seemingly carrying some heavy burden; but they had no suspicion or curiosity as to what might be going on, and never opened their door to look out. A little later they heard the steps go down, but without the slightest interest in them.

Presently the door of the sick room, leading into the passage, opened softly, and in an instant later the girls, who were on the alert, started swiftly and silently to their feet and stole out to meet Servia.

"Mrs. Horah seems so much better this morning that I can scarcely prevail on her to lie in bed until the doctor comes," said the woman, forestalling the eager questions of the girls.

"She had a good night?" inquired Zenobia.

"An excellent night. I am going to bring her some breakfast. You may go in and sit with her until I get it ready. You may talk to her, but don't ask her questions, and don't let her talk, if you can help it," said the woman, as she went downstairs.

Zenobia opened the door, and the two girls entered the room. It was now in semiobscurity, but a voice from the white bed said, softly:

"I see you, my dears! Come to me."

Both girls advanced, one on each side of the bed. She put out a hand to each.

"We are so thankful to the Lord that you are so much better, mamma. But do not answer us, please. Jemima

has come to stay with me and help me to nurse you," said Zenobia, tenderly kissing and fondling the hand she held.

"It was very sweet of you, my dear, to come," said Mrs. Horah, pressing Jemima's hand as it fondled hers.

"You always overrate me, my dear friend. But, pray, let us do the talking," said Nat Pryor's niece, with one of her uncle's smiles.

"Mr. Gilbert Godfrey has come," said Zenobia.

"Yes, dear, I knew it before you did. He was the first to render me intelligent assistance. I shall ever be grateful to him."

"Oh, mamma, if you will talk, we shall have to leave the room," said Zenobia, sadly.

"Nonsense! my dear, little one. Talking as I do will not hurt me in the least. When did you return, Zenobia?"

"Yesterday morning, almost immediately after you had been put to bed and asleep under the influence of an opiate."

"How did you know I was ill? Who brought you home?"

"Murdok hurried off to fetch a doctor from Mistyrock, and called at The Notches on his way, and told us and then went on, and Col. Pryor brought me and Jemima here. The colonel stayed until after the doctor arrived and gave a favorable report, and then he consented to return home."

"He is the best of friends," murmured Mrs. Horah to herself.

Servia here entered, bearing the light, nutritious food ordered by the doctor, and, at the same time, said:

"Breakfast is ready, young ladies, and Mr. Godfrey has come down."

"Go, my dears. Do not keep the young man waiting," said Mrs. Horah.

The girls kissed the lady gently before they left the room. In the parlor they found the table neatly laid for breakfast, Brush in attendance, and Mr. Godfrey standing, holding in each hand a bouquet of brilliant autumn flowers, which he presented to the girls with his morning greeting. When they had thanked him, and had satis-

factorily answered his questions as to Mrs. Horah's condition, they all sat down to breakfast.

Only Gilbert Godfrey inquired about Murdok Horah. And when the three young people who then represented the family circle at Horah Hall had heard Brush's "pious lie" in explanation of the young master's absence from the morning meal, it is needless to say that they were not inconsolable for the loss of his company, though neither of them suspected the cause of his nonappearance.

They had scarcely risen from the table, when Dr. Bland and Col. Pryor drove up, the one in his gig, the other in his buggy. Both were delighted at the good report of the patient's condition.

After the doctor had seen Mrs. Horah, he gave her leave to sit up, but advised her not to leave the room, or exert herself that day. The doctor and the colonel then drove away together.

It was late in the day when Murdok Horah lumbered downstairs, red-eyed, nervous, cross-grained.

When he entered the back parlor he looked around for Zenobia, but saw no one there but Mr. Godfrey, who was seated at a table, engaged in footing up the plantation accounts, which work had fallen into arrears during his absence.

"Where are the girls?" curtly demanded Murdok, dropping heavily into a chair, without the civility of a "Good-morning."

"The young ladies are in Mrs. Horah's room, sir," coldly replied Mr. Godfrey.

"And how is she this morning?"

"Mrs. Horah is much better, I am happy to say."

"Glad to hear it. I thought there was a good deal of fuss for nothing."

Godfrey made no reply.

"Say!" Murdok suddenly exclaimed, "I shall be of age in a few months, and when I come back from Europe I shall inspect those books of yours. Do you hear?"

"They will be open for your inspection, sir," replied Mr. Godfrey, with dignity.

"All right. Now I am going upstairs to see mother," Murdok said.

When he knocked at Mrs. Horah's chamber door he was admitted by Servia.

Mrs. Horah and her two young companions were seated around a small table covered with lace and embroidery patterns. and Jemima was showing some new and elegant stitches.

"I am very glad to see you so much better, mother," he said, drawing a chair to the table and seating himself close beside Zenobia.

The girl shrank from him as much as it was possible to do without attracting attention.

"Yes, I am better," replied Mrs. Horah.

"I thought they were all needlessly alarmed," he observed.

"I thought so, too," she assented.

"Well, as you seem to have quite recovered, I suppose there will be no objection to my starting to-morrow for New York; for the steamer sails the next day at twelve, and I shall barely have time to catch it. If I should miss it, of course I should forfeit my passage money. In fact, I had arranged to go to-day, but your sudden seizure arrested my journey," said Murdok, with a slight sense of injury in his tone.

"I am sorry your journey was delayed; but there can be no objection to your starting now as soon as you please," said his mother, so calmly that Murdok, who did not know that she was under the influence of a sedative that had been administered by her physician, wondered at the seeming indifference with which she gave her consent to his departure.

"Of course I will write to you from New York, and also from the sea in case we should meet a homeward-bound ship, and again as soon as I reach Liverpool," said Murdok, condescendingly.

"I shall be glad to hear of your safe arrival," replied his mother, who had all the dread of the ocean common to those who had never undertaken a sea voyage.

"And I hope Zenobia will write to-morrow after I have left, for the last chance of my getting a letter before I sail," he said, much mollified by the ease with which he got his own way.

"I will drive to the station and telegraph to you on

Wednesday morning, so that you will have the latest news before you sail; that will be best," said Zenobia, who was ready to do any kind act that did not expose her to his familiarities.

But she was mistaken in thinking that she could be safe this time.

"You are an angel! I must give you a kiss for that!" he exclaimed, throwing his arms around her and kissing her, not only once, but a dozen times, before she could twist herself out of his grasp.

She ran out of the room into her own, shut and bolted the door, and, as before, plunged her offended face into a basin of water.

"Oh, Holy Virgin! I know it is a sin to hate! But how can I help hating that monster!" she cried, as she dried her face with a towel.

Meanwhile, Murdok had flung himself back in his chair, and burst into a roar of hilarious laughter, exclaiming:

"That was sharp, wasn't it? Ridiculous little prude! I'll bet if it had been that clown Noll Pryor, she wouldn't have made such a fuss! I'll warrant he has kissed her often enough!"

"Mr. Horah!" It was Jemima's voice that spoke, and Murdok looked up to meet the "tiger eyes" blazing upon him.

"Well, Miss Abbace?" he inquired, with all the effrontery he could summon.

"You are entirely mistaken, sir! My cousin Oliver never offended any lady in that manner!"

"Did I say he offended her?" he demanded, with an insinuating laugh.

"He would have unpardonably offended her by offering such rudeness; but he was incapable of doing so!" retorted Jemima.

"Children! Dear children! You are surely making mountains of molehills," said Mrs. Horah.

Jemima instantly took her hostess' hand and pressed it, saying:

"Forgive me, dear friend. I am a bad-tempered wretch, I know. And here comes Zenobia, to forgive everybody," she added, as the latter reëntered the room, and, passing by her former seat, took her place next Mrs. Horah.

Deeply offended as she was, she felt that she should not absent herself from the society of her invalid "mamma" and their guest.

Soon after the dinner bell rang, and Mrs. Horah begged the girls to go down, and leave her to the care of Servia.

Murdok arose, and, with mock gallantry, opened the door, and held it open for them to precede him, and then followed them downstairs.

Not another chance did Murdok have to get very near Zenobia. Jemima was her shield.

Early next morning, after a hasty, though hearty, breakfast, Murdok Horah bade adieu to his mother, his friends and his home, and started for New York, en route for Europe.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

NOTHING TO LIVE FOR.

Slowly she faded, day by day;
Her step grew weaker in our hall,
And fainter, at each evening fall,
Her sad voice died away.
Yet on her thin, pale lips the while
Sat resignation's holy smile.
Calm as a child to slumber soothed,
As if an angel's hand had smoothed
The still, white features into rest,
Silent and cold, without a breath
To stir the drapery on her breast,
She slept at last in death.—WHITTIER.

After her son's departure for his tour around the world, Mrs. Horah fell into a lethargy of indifference to all persons, things and events. She seldom left her sitting room, seldomer the house, and never the plantation. She reclined in an armchair, near the sunny window of her back parlor, monotonously knitting, rarely speaking unless spoken to, and too often answering at random, thus betraying her dreary absence of mind.

Zenobia devoted herself to her adopted mother with all a daughter's tenderness. Jemima remained at the Hall to assist in serving and amusing the invalid.

Col. Pryor subscribed for about half a dozen magazines

and newspapers, which he brought to the Hall for th sick lady's entertainment. Oliver brought new music and songs that Zenobia, Godfrey and himself might sing to the accompaniment of the piano by Zenobia, and the violin by the tutor.

Gilbert posted himself regarding the literary news, and sent for fresh novels to read to her. Even the negroes brought their offerings of game of their own trapping or shooting.

In short, all around her did all in their power to help her, to rouse her from the melancholy into which she was falling. But all their well-meant efforts only bored and wearied her. She was grateful for their affection and thoughtfulness, yet it was with difficulty that she managed to conceal from them how much they worried her. She was sick of it all! She was sick of life!

She received a short letter from Murdok, dated New York, written on the eve of sailing, in which he informed her that he had caught the steamer by a "close shave," and told her that he would write again from Liverpool, and directed her to take good care of Zenobia, for he meant to marry "that girl" when he should return.

Mrs. Horah roused herself to reply to that letter, and directed her answer to Liverpool, where, it might be supposed, the young man and his traveling companion would remain for a few days to view the town.

After this a month elapsed before she received a second letter, in which he acknowledged the receipt of hers, and said that he was about to leave for London. She promptly replied to this letter also, directing it to the address he had given her.

After this nearly two months passed before she heard from her son again.

Then he was about to leave London for Paris; and, as he could not yet, he said, give any particular address, as he did not precisely know where he should "hang out," he asked her to direct the letter to the *Poste Restante* of that city, and to inclose him a letter of credit for five thousand dollars.

Isabel Horah shuddered at this demand. He had taken five thousand with him. Indeed, it was to obtain this money that he visited his home in the early autumn. Now

she had in the bank but little more than the sum he demanded. Nor could she have any more until the next year's crops should be grown, reaped and sold. Nor had she any possessions that she could sell to bring so much money. Horah Hall Manor belonged to her son. The widow's "third" left by her husband was certainly hers, but it consisted of old furniture of little value, and of old plate of not much more, and a few slaves, rather than sell whom she would choose to die. But she felt that she must send him the money, even if it left her without a dollar in the bank.

She decided to call in the aid of her faithful friend, Nat Pryor, to get the letter of credit for her. So the next day, when the colonel came to make a morning call, she broached the business she wished him to execute.

Nat Pryor, though he knew nothing of the first five thousand dollars that the young spendthrift had taken with him and squandered in less than four months, was aghast at the amount of money demanded.

"My dear Mrs. Horah! My dear friend!" he exclaimed, "that is a very large sum for a young man of his moderate fortune, and not yet of age, to want to spend! Why, at such a rate he will soon run through his estate, ruin himself and you, too! Send him five hundred, and counsel him to come home. He has been abroad long enough to see the whole of Europe. Be advised. You have some responsibilities, my dear madam, while the young man is under age."

"He will be of age next month," said Mrs. Horah, wearily, "and I shall be glad to be relieved of the responsibility to which you refer."

"But in the meantime you have it. Take my advice."

"Well, well, I am sure you are right. I will do as you think best. Will you—— But, oh, it is too much to ask!"

"What is it? Don't hesitate. There is nothing in my power which I shall not be glad to do for you," urged the colonel.

"Then"—she began, in a hesitating manner—"I suppose that there cannot be a letter of credit obtained nearer than Winchester, and it is too much to ask you to go so far," she said, with a deprecating sigh.

"Indeed, no! I will go with the greatest pleasure. When shall I start?"

"Oh, my friend, you are so kind to me. I cannot sufficiently thank you. Go at your own convenience," she replied.

"Then the sooner the better, I suppose. I will start early to-morrow morning."

"Thank you—oh, thank you," she said, taking his honest hand and pressing it cordially. Then she went to her secretary and wrote a check for the amount, and gave it to the colonel.

"I will start to-morrow by sunrise, so as to get to town before the bank closes," he said; and, as it was growing late, he took his leave.

The letter of credit was duly dispatched. And in less time than an answer might have been expected from across the Atlantic, it came. Murdok's letter was evidently written immediately upon the receipt of his mother's, and under the spur of great disappointment and furious passion. It will not bear reproduction. It was unfilial, abusive and scandalous. It ended by reminding his mother that he was now, at last, of age, that the money was his own, and that he did not propose to be swindled out of it.

It had a new effect upon Mrs. Horah. It metaphorically froze her—turned her to stone. She sent immediately for Col. Pryor, and silently placed the letter in his hand. He read it, and looked at her with a face full of painful compassion.

"What are you going to do?" he gently inquired.

"First, to ask you, my long-suffering friend, to go again to Winchester, draw out every dollar of the money deposited there in my name, and send it to Murdok. Just send it in a plain envelope, direct from the bank. I cannot answer that letter," she said, as she moved to her secretary, examined her bank account, wrote a check that covered the full amount of her deposit, and handed it with her bank book, to her friend. Then she sank exhausted in her chair.

Nat Pryor held the papers in his hand and sighed deeply.

"Do you know what you are doing in sending him all

his money?" he inquired. "You are just giving him rope enough to hang himself."

"Let him hang himself!" was on her lips, but she suppressed the words and mentally prayed for forgiveness.

"Do you really mean to do this?" inquired the colonel, looking at the check.

"Yes. It is his own, I suppose, and he demanded it, and must have it. I am weary, weary, weary of contention."

Col. Pryor sighed and rose to bid her good-evening.

And so the last ready money was sent to Murdok.

Isabel Horah gradually sank. The last time she was downstairs was on Christmas Day, when she distributed presents to all the colored folk according to her annual custom.

Early in the new year she wrote a note to Col. Pryor, asking him to come to the Hall, and bring with him a lawyer, for she wished to make her will.

Poor Nat Pryor! He had, indeed, "garnered up his heart" in that one woman! Lately he had seen her sinking slowly into her grave, yet had tried to "hope against hope" for her recovery. Even now, when she was slowly dying, he would have given much for the right to watch beside her day and night.

He was so agitated by her note that it was some time before he could sufficiently compose himself to order his gig and drive to Mistyrock in search of Mr. Clement Kent, the village lawyer.

He found that functionary at leisure to accompany him to Horah Hall.

It was early in the afternoon when they reached that place. Brush showed them into the drawing room, and went to announce their arrival to his mistress.

He did not return, but Zenobia came in with a message. She apologized to the lawyer, and requested him to wait in the room for a little while, and asked the colonel to accompany her to Mrs. Horah's chamber.

Col. Pryor found the invalid reclining in an easy-chair, wasted to a bloodless form of skin and bone. She beckoned him to her side, where a chair had already been placed for his accommodation.

There was some strictly confidential conversation between them, and then the lawyer was summoned.

Mr. Kent entered the room, bowed to the sick lady, and took the indicated seat at the stand by her side, on which writing materials had been arranged for his use.

Isabel Horah's will was short and simple. She had but little to leave. To the few slaves who were her own, she gave their freedom. To her dear friend, Nathaniel Pryor, she left her silver dinner set that had been her father's. To her beloved, adopted daughter, Zenobia de Leon, she left the rest of her family plate, her jewels and her wardrobe. She appointed Nathaniel Pryor executor of the will, and guardian of Zenobia.

When the document was ready, Gilbert Godfrey and Jemima Abbace were called in to witness it. Then all the young people were sent from the room, and when Mrs. Horah, Col. Pryor and Mr. Kent were left alone together, the lady said she wished him to draw up a special deed of manumission for one of her servants.

And when this document was written, and signed by Isabel Horah, and witnessed by Nathaniel Pryor, she placed it with the will in the colonel's hands, and said:

"I leave these papers in your charge. I desire you to hold them until after my death. I have divined your wishes in regard to our two dear, young people, who are so much attached to each other, and I entirely sympathize with you and with them. I would like, therefore, when I go away, that you should take Zenobia, and Servia as her attendant, home with you to The Notches, and that the marriage of the young pair should take place within a year. Also, that you retain possession of that deed of manumission until the marriage of Zenobia and Oliver, and then deliver it."

She paused to recover breath and strength.

Nat Pryor was silent, because he could not command himself.

"Am I imposing on you too great a responsibility, dear friend?" she inquired, at last.

"Oh, no, no!" he said, in a broken, scarcely articulate voice. "The greatest comfort I can have in this world will be doing your will."

"God bless you, my true friend! And now I will not

keep you any longer. I must lie down," she said, in a tone so low and faint that Nat Pryor hastened to ring the bell and summon Zenobia before he took leave and left the room with the lawyer.

"Take my gig and go home, Kent. I shall not leave the house to-night. And as your office is within a few feet of Dr. Bland's, call and ask him to come here at once."

"All right," said the lawyer, "I'll do it."

Mrs. Horah went to her bed, from which she never rose again. She told Zenobia to close the window shutters, draw the curtains and then leave the room, for she was only a little more weary than usual, and wished to be quite alone and very quiet.

Zenobia did all she required, kissed her tenderly, and then very unwillingly went out of the chamber.

A little later in the evening she slipped off her shoes and tiptoed into the room, to find her beloved friend sleeping. She sat down by her side to watch and wait. It was a long vigil. Once in the profound silence she heard Jemima cautiously approaching the room, but she stole out to meet her friend, and forbade her to enter the chamber for fear of waking the sleeper. Then Zenobia returned and renewed her lonely watch of love.

Near morning she heard the sleeper murmuring to herself. She stopped to listen.

"How lovely he is! Did you ever see a lovelier baby, Delphie?"

Zenobia stooped over the dreamer, and saw even in the dim light that her eyes were wide open.

"Mamma! Dear mamma!" she whispered.

"No, Delphia, don't take him away! My love! My angel! My treasure! See how he smiles! What a heavenly smile he has! Baby! baby! kiss mamma! Poor mamma! Put your little arms around her neck! This way! There! Ah, my blessing! My blessing!"

In great alarm Zenobia gazed down into her face, but could see nothing in the shadows but that her eyes were open; she was not asleep.

Zenobia sped to the windows, drew back the curtains and opened the shutters. The late winter sunshine streamed into the room. Then she returned to the bed-

side and gazed down into the face of the invalid. Even her inexperienced eyes saw death in that face.

"Mamma! dearest mamma! speak to me!" she pleaded, taking her hand and gazing into her eyes. But her hand felt cold and hard, and the eyes had no recognition in them; they were brilliant with the light of joy that the girl had never seen in them in all her knowledge of the woman.

Zenobia fled downstairs to summon the household. The first whom she found was Col. Pryor, who was walking uneasily up and down the hall below. Before he could turn to ask her a question, she hastily announced her alarming intelligence, wringing her hands all the while.

"My God!" he exclaimed; "my God!"

But the sound of wheels on the drive near the house immediately arrested his attention.

"Who is it?" demanded Zenobia, in impatient anguish.

"It is the doctor, for whom I sent last night," exclaimed Col. Pryor, hastening to unlock the door before the newcomer had time to get out of his gig.

As soon as he entered, however, making excuse for not having come on the evening before by explaining that he had been engaged all night on a case he could not sooner leave, he was immediately hurried upstairs to Mrs. Horah's bedside. But the dying woman was past all earthly aid.

All that day Isabel Horah lay with such a light of happiness illuminating her face as no one there had ever seen before!

Forgotten were all the sorrows of her life! Forgotten the husband who had met a deservedly violent death! Forgotten the unnatural son who had broken her heart! Remembered only her baby boy; her own gallant father; her sweet mother! To them, and of them, she talked incessantly.

"Is not my boy a beauty, mamma? Are you not proud of your little grandson, papa? Ah! You want me to give him to you, do you? To take home with you! But I cannot spare my angel! Oh, no, indeed!" So she babbled on and on.

Celia, who had come in and stood at the foot of the

bed, could bear this no longer, but ran out of the room of death, muttering incoherently:

"Oh, my God! my God! she knows it all now! In her dying hour she knows! A curse will fall on us!"

"Here, give me my baby! Right in my arms! I am going to sleep now," Isabel Horah murmured, faintly.

And she went to sleep, never to wake in this world again.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A CALM BEFORE THE STORM.

We see but dimly through these mists and vapors,
Amid these earthly damps;
What seems to us but sad funereal tapers
May be Heaven's distant lamps.

There is no death! What seems so is transition.
This life of mortal breath
Is but a suburb of the life Elysian,
Whose portal we call death.—LONGFELLOW.

What peace is so perfect as the peace of death? It is only the living who disturb themselves.

That still, white face was an image of infinite content. The good, old physician gazed upon it for a few moments, while he felt the pulse to be sure that life had left it, and he then reverently drew the white coverlid over it, saying softly to the bystanders as he turned toward them:

"It is all over. She has gone!"

Loud wails of anguish broke from all the servants who were gathered in the chamber, except Servia, who probably felt more deeply than the others, but who had long before learned to control her emotions.

Even Jemima sank into a chair and broke into sobs and tears.

For a few seconds Zenobia looked dazed, as if unable to realize what had happened; then, suddenly, with a long, low moan of despair, she threw up her arms, and must have fallen to the floor had not Col. Pryor intercepted her, and, with his arm around her waist, partly led and partly carried her from the room of death.

He took her downstairs to the rear parlor, where so many of the scenes of our story transpired, and where Gilbert and Oliver were waiting. He took her straight to Oliver, who rose from his chair to meet them.

"Take her, my boy, and comfort her. She has only you left now," he said, as he placed her in the outstretched arms of the youth.

And Oliver—all his boyish, shy self-consciousness forgotten in the solemnity of death and despair—sank with her into a chair, folded her to his bosom, and laid her stricken young head against his honest, tender heart. He sympathized too deeply and sincerely with her to utter one word of condolence, but he pressed his lips to her forehead and mingled his tears with hers.

Col. Pryor left them alone, and went away by himself into the deserted drawing room, to give vent to the sorrow that was filling his breast.

As soon as he could command himself sufficiently to do his first duty, he passed into the familiar back parlor, which so painfully recalled the image of his lost friend, and which, under the circumstances, he was pleased to find unoccupied, sat down at the open secretary and wrote a short letter to Murdok. He merely announced to him the death of his mother. He felt that he could write no more. He sealed the letter with black wax, and directed it to the *Poste Restante*, Paris, hoping that it might reach the young man before he should leave that city for the East.

Then he took the letter out to Dr. Bland, who was about to depart from the Hall, and requested him to let his coachman post it when they reached Mistyrock. The colonel also asked his old friend to call at the undertaker's establishment and send him on to the house.

But why should we linger over these sad scenes?

Col. Pryor, as executor of Mrs. Horah's will, took charge of everything at Horah Hall, including the ordering of the funeral.

And three days later the body of Isabel Horah was laid in its last resting place, in the family vault at the church of Mistyrock.

From the church the household party returned to Horah Hall, accompanied by the family lawyer, to witness

the opening of the will of the deceased. After a short rest and slight refreshment, the whole household was assembled in the back parlor where Lawyer Kent, standing at the center table, proceeded to break the seals and unfold the document.

As he read the preliminaries, and then of the little bequests to Col. Pryor and Zenobia, which immediately followed, only silent tears coursed down the cheeks of his hearers; but, when reading on, he reached the clauses by which she freed the slaves she personally owned, grief for the lost mistress and gratitude for acquired freedom burst forth from these dark children of nature in wild wails.

It was some time before they discovered the fact that Servia's name was not among those of the emancipated, and they began in whispers to express their surprise, because Servia had been the greatest favorite with the mistress, and to ask each other what could be the reason of the omission, and whether there might not be some mistake, after all!

Col. Pryor looked at the apparently neglected or forgotten favorite to see how she would take this. The woman's face was perfectly impassive. He walked over to her side, and said:

"Servia, my good girl, what do you think of this?"

"I do not know what to think of it, sir," she said, raising her patient, dark eyes to his, "but I trust my dear, lost mistress; and, above all, I trust my Heavenly Master."

"Then you do not distress yourself about the difference that has been made between yourself and your companions that seems so very much in their favor and against yourself?"

"Why should I, sir?" she gently inquired. "I am not the worse for their being the better. And our lives are so short that it does not seem worth while to worry over anything that concerns only our personal selves. To be sure, though, when it is anybody one loves who is in trouble, then we can't help worrying."

"Still, I am afraid you do shrink from falling into the hands of young Mr. Horah," ventured the colonel.

Her face changed and grew troubled, but only for a moment. She almost instantly recovered herself, and slowly and reverently bowing her head, she answered:

"I am really in the hands of the Lord, whoever else's hands I may seem to be in. Nothing can happen to me without His permission; therefore, no real evil can come to me."

"Servia, my good girl, tell me where you got your great faith," said Col. Pryor.

She looked at him with questioning surprise in her truthful, dark eyes, and then said:

"Why, sir, from the Fountain of all good! But if you ask me who led me to that fountain head, I will tell you that it was my dear and honored mistress."

The lawyer was carefully folding up the document which he had finished reading, and now handed it with a bow to the executor, and prepared to take leave.

Both Col. Pryor and Zenobia, the latter being in temporary charge of the house, pressed him, as it was late, to remain for the night.

He thanked them, but declined; shook hands with everyone, congratulated the emancipated negroes, and departed.

"I am so sorry, Servia!—oh, so sorry!" said Zenobia, as soon as they were alone together in the young girl's bedroom that night.

"Dear child, it is not worth being sorry for. Nothing is, I think, but sin," patiently replied the woman.

"You do not think hard of poor mamma, do you, Servia?" pleaded the girl, who could scarcely justify the deceased lady herself.

"Think hard of my kind mistress! Oh, no, indeed! She had her reasons, no doubt. And now, dear child, do not distress yourself about that. Life is too short. Even my life is nearly half over now, though I should live to the Psalmist's limit, for I am nearly thirty years of age. Let me see you in bed, dear child. Now, good-night. God have you in His keeping!"

And so the patient woman left her beloved charge to repose.

Meanwhile, in the kitchen, a gathering of weeping negroes discussed their mistress' will.

"Mist'ess would a set all of us free ef we'd a 'longed to her!" said Cindy, wiping her eyes.

"Yer 'member, chillun, dat day las' week w'en she call us all inter her room an' had her trunks an' bureaus all open an' her fine dresses an' scarfs an' things 'splayed out ter 'stribute among us? An' she guv 'way ebery stitch she had 'cept sum ole yaller lace an' dingy shawls what she sabe fer Miss Snowby, an' sum nightgowns an' unnerclose what she sabe for herself?"

"Yes," joined in old Si, "an' she arter'ards sent fer all we cullud ge men an' dewided ole marse's wardrobe among us?"

"Dere wern't nobody she nebber fergot," chimed in Brush, contributing his voice to the chorus of praise.

"'Cept 'twer Servy! Now, isn't it queer 'bout Servy? Servy wer' her favorite. An' she nebber left her free, dough Servy wer' her own slave. Mouty queer 'bout Servy, I tell yer all now!" said old Si.

"Why, sho' enough, she didn't eben make her no p'esent!" exclaimed Cindy, as if the fact had just struck her.

"Somefin' wrong 'twix Servy an' mist'ess, now, I tell yer, chillun!" suggested old Si.

"I be'liebe yer, Uncle Sias! I do," exclaimed Brush. "Yer'd a t'ought so ef yer'd a ben inter dat room w'en poor mist'ess died! Ebery one ob us cryin' an' screamin' fit ter break our hearts, dere stood dat Servy a-standin' an' a-starin' like a stone statue, widout a tear in her eye! Trufe I's a-tellin' yer, chillun!"

"Yes, dat's so," chimed in all the others who had been present at the deathbed of their mistress.

"She did that, Servy did! Starin' at nuffin'. I seen her myself," added Cindy, shaking her head.

"Somefin' mouty wrong 'tween dat gal Servy an' poor mist'ess!" agreed all the negroes.

Then there was a solemn silence for a few moments, filled only by slowly shaking heads and soft sighs.

"Uncle Sias, can't yer start somefin' slow an' sor'ful-like on de banjo in honah ob de poor mist'ess?" asked Cindy.

"I'll try, Cindy, honey! I'll try an' do my best w'ich I's been hankerin' arter it," sighed the farm minstrel, as he

dragged his instrument out of its bag, tuned it up and commenced.

He touched a few chords, softly, slowly, played a prelude—sweetly, solemnly—and then his melodious voice rose in tender, sympathetic notes, as he sang his simple but heartfelt improvisation:

"Oh, brudders, woane you go?
  Oh, sisters, woane you go?
De angels is a-calling you
  From dis world ob woe!

"Doane you hear dem calling
  From de gol'en gate?
Come up yere to glory!
  Dere is no time to wait!

"Oh, brudders, woane you go?
  Oh, sisters, woane you go?
De angels is a-calling you
  From dis world ob woe!"

Early the next morning the little party, consisting of Col. Pryor, Oliver, Gilbert Godfrey, Zenobia and Jemima, assembled around the breakfast table, while discussing their morning meal arranged the program for the day.

At the suggestion of Col. Pryor, Gilbert Godfrey consented to continue at Horah Hall, in charge of affairs until the return of the heir, the executor undertaking to continue his salary from the funds at his disposal. It was also settled that Zenobia, attended by Servia, should return with the Pryors to The Notches that day.

The return of the heir was to effect many changes in the fortunes of those who dwelt in and near Horah Hall, the story of which will be found in the second of this series, published under the name of "Zenobia's Suitors," Southworth Library, No. 173.

FAMOUS AUTHORS FAMOUS FICTION

THE EAGLE SERIES

The Pioneer Line of Paper Novels

¶ IF we did not publish such an extensive line of paper-covered books, we might, just as the cloth book publishers do, take a chance and occasionally put out a story that is not all it should be in the way of interest. Having over 2,700 titles in our list, however, we are obliged to make each succeeding number better, in order to impress the reader with the sterling quality of the S. & S. kind.

THE EAGLE SERIES is built on this principle. It contains 498 books by authors whose very names are a guarantee of reading matter worth while. There is not a "plug" in the entire lot. Just get a copy or two from your newsdealer and read them. We know that you cannot help but agree with what we say about this line after you have done so.

PRICE, TEN CENTS PER COPY

"The Right Books at the Right Price"

NOTICE—If these books are sent by mail, four cents must be added to the price of each copy to cover postage

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, NEW YORK

STORIES for boys must be true to life. If they are not, boys will have nothing to do with them. This has been our experience with the MEDAL LIBRARY books. In it we publish all the books that other publishers get a dollar for. What do we ask for them? Only ten cents!

THE MEDAL LIBRARY

contains stories by Horatio Alger, Jr., Oliver Optic, G. A. Henty, Frank H. Converse, James Otis and a hundred others who are just as famous. Take our word for it, a boy never bought better reading matter or had a more generous list to select from than what we are now offering to you at ten cents per copy in the MEDAL LIBRARY.

PRICE, TEN CENTS PER COPY

"The Right Books at the Right Price"

NOTICE—If these books are sent by mail, four cents must be added to the price of each copy to cover postage.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, New York

Fine Books by Famous Authors

Books by the following authors are now making their appearance in the **NEW EAGLE SERIES.** Their very names are a guarantee that Street & Smith are giving the reading public more than its money's worth.

Charles Garvice
Mary E. Bryan
Geraldine Fleming
Richard Marsh
Lucy Randall Comfort
E. Phillips Oppenheim
Wenona Gilman
Barbara Howard
Mrs. Alex. McVeigh Miller

Each of the books by the above authors is at least 320 pages in length, has an attractive colored cover and has been printed from new plates. They are marvels of value at the price.

FIFTEEN CENTS PER COPY

SEND FOR OUR COMPLETE CATALOGUE

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, NEW YORK

Southworth Library

SWEET LOVE'S ATONEMENT

No. 172

BY MRS. E. D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH